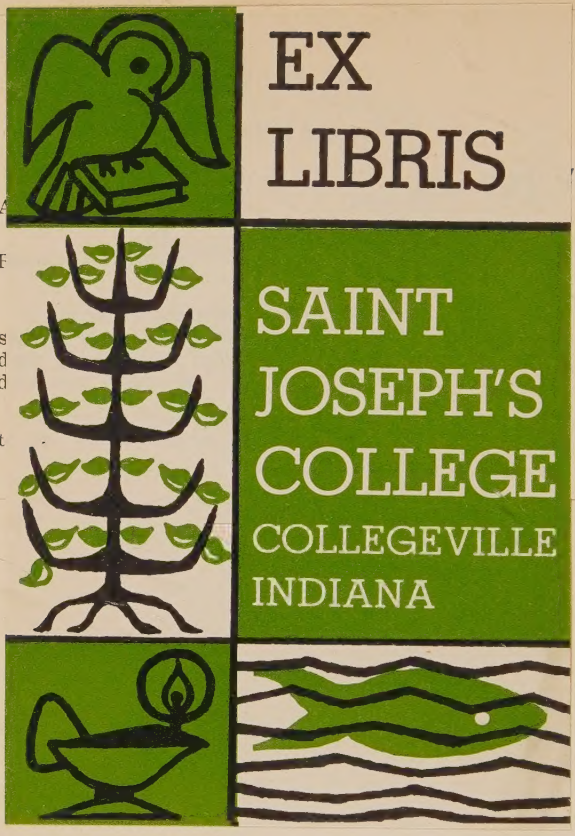
EXPRESSING WILLIE
NICE PEOPLE
39 EAST

RACHEL CROTHERS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EXPRESSING WILLIE

A Comedy in Three Acts

THE CAST

AS FIRST PRESENTED AT FORTY EIGHTH STREET THEATER
NEW YORK, APRIL 16, 1924

MINNIE WHITCOMB	CHRYSTAL HERNE
WILLIE SMITH	RICHARD STERLING
MRS. SMITH	LOUISE CLOSSER HALE
TALIAFERRO	ALAN BROOKS
GEORGE CADWALADER	WARREN WILLIAM
DOLLY CADWALADER	MOLLY MACINTYRE
FRANCES SYLVESTER	MERLE MADDERN
SIMPSON	DOUGLAS GARDEN
REYNOLDS	JOHN GERARD
JEAN	LOUISE WALLER
GORDEN	JAMES BELL

ACT I

TIME: *The present. A Saturday afternoon in spring.*

PLACE: *The ridiculously magnificent house of Willie Smith on Long Island.*

The room is the most pronounced type of the overdone Italian in America. Its lofty spaces and emptiness leave it cold and formal. The few fine old pieces of furniture and tapestry emphasize the space rather than fill it.

Two steps at the back leading up into the hall make an impressive entrance into the room.

As the curtain rises—two women are standing in the center of the room rather clinging together and looking lost and grotesquely out of place.

One is a small spare woman with an extremely sharp and intelligent face. She is about sixty-five and a shrewd practical strength and dominance make her a striking little figure in spite of her plainness, which the very good and dignified, though somewhat passee black gown does not conceal but rather accentuates.

The other woman, who is holding on to the older one and looking rapturously about the room, is tall and thin and utterly drab in personality. Her clothes look as though she had been traveling and are generally limp and nondescript in effect. The hat is a little askew and has a faint suggestion of an attempt

to be becoming and artistic with its rather wide brim and pale rose. Her face has a persistent sweetness and appeal. She looks wonderingly and admiringly at others, not expecting to be looked at or admired herself.

MINNIE [*In awe-struck tones*]. It's marvelous—perfectly marvelous! I feel as if I were standing in an old palace or something. It's unreal. I know I'll wake up and find I'm back home. I've dreamed what it would be like but I never dreamed anything as magnificent as this. It's marvelous!

MRS. SMITH. It cost an awful lot of money, Minnie. The most expensive architect in the country built it and the most costly interior decorator decorated it and he's bought everything there is to be bought in Europe and America. They call this the living room —but nobody lives in it. Willie's in the city all day and I stay up in my own room with a little of my old furniture I saved when he began getting rid of things—and the servants rattle around down here eating their heads off. He's got twenty now—all told —inside and out.

MINNIE. Twenty what?

MRS. SMITH. Twenty servants.

MINNIE. Oh my! It's like a book, isn't it? I just can't believe it! How proud and happy you must be, Mrs. Smith! Oh, how proud and happy!

MRS. SMITH. Shucks! I'm a lonely old woman, Minnie, and Willie's a lonely man.

MINNIE. How could he be? He's a prince among men now. Every paper you read—every magazine you pick up has his picture in it and an article about his

phenomenal fortune and the phenomenal way be made it.

MRS. SMITH. Well this is what it's bought him—an empty house.

MINNIE. I should think it would be full all the time of interesting important people.

MRS. SMITH. It would be easy enough to fill it up. [*She stops a moment—listening.*] You out there in the hall, Simpson?

SIMPSON [*A very perfect footman appearing in the entrance*]. Yes, Madam!

MRS. SMITH. You needn't hang around. Go see they get this young lady's trunk put in the right room.

SIMPSON. Very good, Madam. [*He retires with dignity.*]

MRS. SMITH [*Whispering*]. They listen so you can't breathe but they hear it. I'm having you right next to mine so you won't be scared. What was I talking about? Oh yes, it would be easy enough to fill it up, but Willie don't want anything but the best—and the best ain't easy to get.

MINNIE. I don't see how it could be hard for *him now*. Oh, that *chair!* It looks as if kings have sat in it. And there's one of those things I've never seen before. [*Looking at the prie dieux.*] He's a great man *now*.

MRS. SMITH. He's a *rich* man. You see he hasn't married anybody yet.

MINNIE. That seems so strange.

MRS. SMITH. He came nearer to marrying you than he ever has anybody since.

MINNIE. Oh don't let's talk about that, Mrs. Smith.

That's all over and gone—long, long ago. If it weren't I couldn't have come. Your letter was so sweet and made me feel so comfortable. I was awfully proud to come of course. The whole town's excited about it. They've always said you both were completely weaned away from everybody—and then when your letter did come, it was just—— [*Her voice breaks slightly.*]

Mrs. Smith. You're a good woman, Minnie. You certainly deserve a little rest and change from drudgery. I've been a long time doing this—a long time inviting you—but I had to wait 'till he suggested it himself.

Minnie. Oh *did* he? Of course I know he lives in another world now—entirely. What a beautiful piano! Who plays on it?

Mrs. Smith. Nobody. Minnie, I'm worried about Willie.

Minnie. Oh my! Why? His health?

Mrs. Smith. No—worse'n that. He's bitten with a new thing entirely.

Minnie. Oh dear! What?

Mrs. Smith. He's too smart for just the ordinary thing that's chasin' after rich people—but this is an *idea*—rather than just the people themselves, and it's the first time I've ever been scared about his common sense. Willie's as smart—as shrewd as they make 'em in business. He's been up against the biggest of 'em—but something's got in under his skin now that I'm afraid of.

Minnie. What? What *is* it?

Mrs. Smith. All kinds of women have chased him,

but up to now *I've* always been the most important woman in his life. I've always been able to steer him without letting him know it.

MINNIE. Is it a woman?

MRS. SMITH. No—it's an idea—but there's a woman mixed up in it and she *might* get him through that. She *might*, and it's the only thing on earth that could take him away from me unless I want him to be taken. [*A sudden vehemence and jealousy showing itself.*]

MINNIE. What *is* the idea?

MRS. SMITH. It's making him think there's something *great* shut up inside of him which has never been found out. It's making him think he's a great man *all by himself*—without his money.

MINNIE. But he *is*—isn't he?

MRS. SMITH. Willie's about as great as my foot. Who made him? *I* did. Who began it all back there in Tuckerville? *I* did. Who nagged him and prodded him and pushed him and *beat* it into him that there *was* a fortune in the toothpaste if it was only put before the public right? Me—*me*— and I don't propose to let a woman who's as foreign to us as the north pole come along and turn his head and get the money and then throw him away like a sucked orange.

MINNIE. But *would* she? Maybe she loves him.

MRS. SMITH. Shucks!

MINNIE. Maybe he loves her.

MRS. SMITH. Willie ain't the loving kind. The usual thing in a woman don't get him at all. If it was just that I wouldn't turn a hair. How old are you now, Minnie? Thirty, ain't you?

MINNIE. Yes. Yes I am. It's really thirty-one.

MRS. SMITH. Well—you look it—but there's no disgrace in that. Willie came nearer lovin' you than he ever did anybody.

MINNIE. Oh, Mrs. Smith!

MRS. SMITH. If you hadn't been quite so fond of him, I expect you would have got him. Lord, Minnie I haven't seen a woman blush like that since I left Tuckerville. You see he hasn't forgotten or he wouldn't have invited you.

MINNIE. Isn't it wonderful that he hasn't?

MRS. SMITH. Don't be so meek and humble. That always was your trouble. Now you run along upstairs and put on the best thing you've got and I'll send for you when Willie comes. He'll want to show you the rest of the house himself, and tell you what everything is and where it came from. That's about all there is to it—the telling about it. See—[*Pointing through a window*] the house sticks way out on that side and way out on the other. You could put an army in it. Mind these slippy floors. I tell Willie the only thing this room is fit for is a skating rink. Simpson! [*Raising her voice.*] He'll take you up, and don't be too long. [SIMPSON *appears from the left and* REYNOLDS, *a footman, from the inner door at center.*] Umm—well—one of you take this young lady up to her room.

SIMPSON. Very good, Madam. [*He silently directs* REYNOLDS *to lead the way and steps back for* MINNIE *to pass.* REYNOLDS *exits at left.*]

MRS. SMITH. And Minnie, if you don't find everything you want you just ring one of those bells and

somebody will come and get it for you—no matter *what* it is.

MINNIE [*As she stands on the top step and looks back into the room*]. Oh my! It *is* a fairy tale. It makes me wish I were a wonderful person for the first time in my life. It makes me want to speak out something—that has never been said. Something beautiful and great. [*She makes a broad vague gesture into the room and stands staring wistfully. A motor horn is faintly heard.*] Oh—is that a bugle?

MRS. SMITH. It's *Willie.* He always blows three times so I'll know it's him. Go on. Scuttle up the stairs. I don't want him to see you yet. [*She motions* MINNIE *out frantically.* SIMPSON *follows* MINNIE *off.*]

[MRS. SMITH *listens a moment, then turns back into the room—waiting with a nervousness which even her grit doesn't quite control.*]

MRS. SMITH [*After a moment—calling sharply*]. Willie!

WILLIE [*From the hall*]. Hello!

MRS. SMITH. Here. I'm in here.

WILLIE [*Appearing in the doorway*]. Well—Snooks, what are you doing down here?

MRS. SMITH. Oh, I'm just lookin' round to see if everything's all right before you—before anybody gets here. I've been all over the house to see that there's soap enough.

WILLIE [*Laughing at her affectionately*]. Nobody here yet?

MRS. SMITH. No—not yet.

WILLIE [*As* SIMPSON *comes to take his coat and hat*]. Oh Simpson,—are there flowers in all the rooms?

SIMPSON. Yes, sir.

WILLIE. Send the Rolls to the four-fifteen. One gentleman will come by that. The others will be motoring down. Have the other garage opened up and put Raymond in charge.

SIMPSON. Very good, sir.

WILLIE. And have my car put up and the Mercedes brought round. I may want it.

SIMPSON. Yes, sir. [*He goes.*]

WILLIE [*Coming down into the room*]. I thought I'd get out earlier but I got caught in a jam at the office.

[WILLIE *is thirty-five—a fairly good looking typical American—radiating health and energy—thoroughly conscious of his success and power. There is still a very wholesome commonplaceness about him which his millions and his strikingly correct clothes cannot hide. He beams at his mother with honest devotion.*]

WILLIE. Well, Mother—I like to see you down here.

MRS. SMITH. Where you going to put her?

WILLIE. Who?

MRS. SMITH. *The* woman—Mrs. Sylvester.

WILLIE. At the end of the south corridor—overlooking the sunken garden. She'll appreciate that effect more than any of them. And Mr. and Mrs. Cadwalader in a suite in the north wing and Taliaferro over on my side.

MRS. SMITH. There isn't any danger of any of 'em staying longer than Monday morning, is there?

WILLIE [*Chuckling*]. No. Why?

MRS. SMITH. I'm going to stay up in my room. I'm not coming down at all.

WILLIE. Of course you are. What do you mean?

MRS. SMITH. I've changed my mind.

WILLIE. You can't do it. That's ridiculous—and I want them to see you. Anybody who knows me knows I've got a great mother.

MRS. SMITH. So long as you know it and I know—it don't matter a fig whether anybody else does or not.

WILLIE [*Laughing at her with pride and affection*]. You're not a very modest little violet, are you?

MRS. SMITH. Modesty never got anybody anywhere till after you're *there*. Then modesty's a great virtue.

WILLIE. But I want you to *see* these people.

MRS. SMITH. I've seen all kinds come and go. They'll soon blow over.

WILLIE. That's where you're wrong. I've struck my gait at last. I like them better than any I've ever known in my life.

MRS. SMITH. Oh—you do?

WILLIE. Yes, I do. They satisfy me. They're free and broad and *real*.

MRS. SMITH. They know your money's real too.

WILLIE. Rot, mother. These people don't care anything about my money.

MRS. SMITH. Oh, they don't?

WILLIE. Not a hang. They've gone way beyond money.

MRS. SMITH. Oh, they have?

WILLIE. They're not the ordinary aristocrat. They're idealists—with *vision*.

MRS. SMITH. When you say *they* I s'pose you mean *her.*

WILLIE. N-o—not exactly. Though I do think Mrs. Sylvester has opened up more for me—made me see more than anyone else *ever* has.

MRS. SMITH. Oh. What's she made you see?

WILLIE. That absolute freedom—the *expression of oneself*—is the most important and developing thing in the world.

MRS. SMITH. Well, I'll put you to the test and see how developed you are. Minnie's here.

WILLIE. What Minnie?

MRS. SMITH. What Minnie? Minnie Whitcomb that you grew up with and almost married and got tired of and dropped like an old shoe. *Your* Minnie.

WILLIE. Here? Where?

MRS. SMITH. Right here in this house. She's come to your week-end party.

WILLIE. Good Heavens, mother, she can't.

MRS. SMITH. *Can't?* She's here. She's come.

WILLIE. How'd she get here? This is *awful.*

MRS. SMITH. Now Willie—are you a big man or a little one? We've owed this to Minnie a long time and I just made up my mind not to put it off any longer. I invited her.

WILLIE. What in——

MRS. SMITH. And I told her *you* did too. I said "*we*" in the letter or I knew she wouldn't come.

WILLIE. *What did you do it for?*

MRS. SMITH. Minnie's always been on my conscience and she *ought* to be on yours.

WILLIE. Well, she's *not*. Why *now?* Why *this* time of all others?

MRS. SMITH. I didn't want her to come and find us in a perfectly empty house. It's just *the* time.

WILLIE. It's just the time to ruin the whole business. This party means an awful lot to me, Mother. It will change my whole—— Where is she?

MRS. SMITH. Upstairs.

WILLIE. What does she look like?

MRS. SMITH. Just the same as she used to.

WILLIE. That'll be nice. Why didn't you—— There's something darned queer about this. Why didn't you tell me you were going to do it?

MRS. SMITH. Because I knew you'd act just exactly the way you *are* actin'.

WILLIE. I'm stumped. I don't know *what* to do.

MRS. SMITH. Do? You're goin' to make her welcome. Minnie's a good girl.

WILLIE. I bet she is. Lord, Mother, when you get set on a thing you *are* a mule.

MRS. SMITH. I'd rather be a mule than a fool any day. Come on—let's get it over with. *Simpson!*

WILLIE. Don't, mother! Don't yell like that. Ring—*ring.* [*Pulling the bell rope himself.*]

MRS. SMITH. My voice is better than any bell in the house. I can sit still and use it. God knows I've helped you to get everything *you* wanted, Willie—with everything in me. Now this is something *I* want and I—— [SIMPSON *appears.*] Tell the young lady to come down.

SIMPSON. She's just here on the stairs now, Madam.

MRS. SMITH. Oh—well—you go away then.

[Simpson *disappears. They wait, watching the entrance. After a moment* Minnie *comes into it. She is wearing a dress of some thin blue material. It is provincial and tame, but it emphasizes her pale sweetness and there is something in her long thinness which is half awkward and half beautiful—a grace which has never asserted itself, because of her extreme shyness and self depreciation. She stands on the top step now—looking at* Willie *with frightened appealing eyes.*]

Mrs. Smith. Well, Minnie, here's Willie. He's just been saying how glad he is to see you.

Willie [*After a slight pause*]. How are you, Minnie? [*He moves towards her with his hand out. She goes down the steps and slips just as she gets to him—throwing out her arms and grasping him to save herself.*]

Mrs. Smith. There, I told you so! That's not her fault. [Willie *disengages himself.*] Sit down, Minnie. Put her in a chair, Willie.

Minnie. Oh no. I'm all right now. It was clumsy of me to do that. I can shake hands now. [*Putting out her hand again.*]

Willie [*Taking her hand uncomfortably*]. How are you, Minnie? How are you? I hope you're well.

Minnie. Oh, yes, thank you, I'm well. Are you well? You look *wonderful.*

Willie. Thanks. Did you—have a—good trip—*on?*

Minnie. Oh yes, I——

Mrs. Smith. No, she didn't. It was hot and cindery.

WILLIE. Yes, I suppose it is very hot in the middle West this time of year.

MRS. SMITH. It always has been and it always will be. Minnie likes the house.

MINNIE. Oh, it's beautiful. And you were so good to invite me to come and see it.

WILLIE [*After a quick look at his mother*]. It's supposed to be one of the best examples of its period.

MRS. SMITH. I haven't told her about your party yet.

WILLIE. Oh—well—a—— [MINNIE *looks questioningly from one to the other.*]. I have some people coming for the week-end—a—over Sunday you know. They'll be arriving soon.

MINNIE. I'm sure you know wonderful people now, Willie.

WILLIE. *I* like them but I think you might have enjoyed yourself more some other time. What I mean to say *is*—these people will seem very strange to you.

MINNIE. I'd like that. The stranger the better. I've seen so little that *is* strange.

MRS. SMITH. Of course. Why travel if everything's just like it is at home?

WILLIE. But what I mean to say is—I'm going to be very frank with you, don't let them see that you're surprised at anything. Just agree and drift along —easy.

MRS. SMITH. Why should she agree when she *don't?*

WILLIE. I'm trying to *explain,* Mother. They speak a different language. They've *had* everything and *done* everything and they're going on after something *further*—that is, after something further than

life as it's ordinarily understood. They're after the *overtones*—so to speak.

MRS. SMITH. The what?

MINNIE. Oh I know. It's a musical term.

WILLIE. That makes me think. Don't say anything about giving music lessons. They wouldn't understand that.

MINNIE. Oh.

WILLIE. Music—in the abstract—yes—that's a good thing to talk about. You can say you're *fond* of music.

MRS. SMITH. But don't tell 'em you've been smart enough to take care of yourself and your good-for-nothing father most of your life by giving piano lessons. Don't tell 'em anything as bad as *that.*

WILLIE. Now mother——

MINNIE. I know what he means. It takes the music out of music when you think of teaching it. I know. I won't.

WILLIE. And by the way—I'll call you Miss Whitcomb, of course.

MINNIE. And shall I call you Mr. Smith?

MRS. SMITH. Rubbish!

WILLIE. And don't wait to be introduced. It isn't done much. I've been in places where they don't introduce people at all. Sometimes I go right up to a person and say "My name's Smith"—See? And that's enough. It's stiff to——

REYNOLDS [*Coming from the outer entrance at C.*]. I beg pardon, sir. A motor is drawing up. I think the—

MRS. SMITH. I'm going. You stay here, Minnie.

[REYNOLDS *goes out C.*]

MINNIE. Oh no, I'll go with you.

MRS. SMITH. No, no—no you don't. You keep her there, Willie.

WILLIE. Keep still. Wait, mother. Don't be running out like that. You——

[MRS. SMITH *scrambles up the steps and out.*]

MINNIE [*Panic stricken*]. Where shall I go?

WILLIE [*Suddenly nervous and trying not to be*]. Don't go any place. Keep still. Sit down. [MINNIE *starts carefully to a chair, almost sitting.*] No don't. Don't do *anything!*

[MINNIE *takes long careful steps and gets to the other side of the piano, standing uncomfortably by it.* WILLIE *goes to the steps and waits.*]

TALIAFERRO [*Coming into the entrance after* REYNOLDS *has entered and stood aside for him*]. Well—here I am.

WILLIE [*Trying to be equal to this important moment*]. Oh hello Taliaferro—hello. How are you? Glad to see you.

[TALIAFERRO *is about forty, tall, slender, and over elaborate in his grace and flamboyant distinction. His great surety of his own importance and his very nonchalant indifference towards others is amusing and charming rather than disagreeable—since under the pose and the ego are a very quick sympathy and a warmth of keen appreciation.*]

TALIAFERRO [*Staying on the steps and looking about —ignoring* WILLIE's *hand*]. It makes a very noble impression. The approach is good. I'd heard it was bad—but it's really very good. About as well done

as it can be in America. I congratulate you, Smith. If one *must* live in a new house, it's very good. How are you? [*He comes down and shakes hands with* Willie *but still looks about the room.*] Oh yes—oh yes. Burton always builds a house—but he builds for *himself*—not for the people who are going to live in it. How do you feel in it? How do *you* feel? [Willie *is getting ready to answer.*] You don't feel at all of course. You're just making motions—and you never will, my dear man, you never will. Only you'll never know it, so what does it matter? Only it does matter. Those are just the things that *do* matter. Oh God *how* they matter! [Minnie *is getting ready for anything that may be expected of her, but no one looks at her.*] I can't paint you in this house, Smith—if that's what you want. I shall have to take you out of it. Of course, if you want a photograph—with this background—*yes*—go to anybody—anybody—but if you want *yourself* painted—if you want *me* I shall take you out of this.

Willie [*Trying to be nonchalant*]. What would you suggest?

Taliaferro. I shan't have to do any suggesting. It will come to me—out of you—so strongly that—Oh—— [Minnie *comes from behind the piano and moves toward them as bravely as possible*]. Oh no—I see. [*Putting a glass in his eye*] Something quite different. I thought for a moment I could paint this lady in this room.

Willie. Do you know Miss Whitcomb? She's staying in the house.

TALIAFERRO. Should I? Are you anything in particular?

[MINNIE *is about to speak.*]

WILLIE. Miss Whitcomb is a musician. Will you come up to your room, now?

TALIAFERRO. Oh no. I'm not one of those guests who stay in the bath most of the time. I'll chat with my fellow artist if you don't mind.

WILLIE. Well—I——

TALIAFERRO. Oh you *do* mind?

WILLIE. Certainly *not*. I'll jump into something comfortable. I've just got out myself. Won't be a minute. This is the great Taliaferro, Miss Whitcomb. You mustn't mind what he says. He tells the truth to us all. [WILLIE *runs up the steps and off R. with as much swank as possible.*]

TALIAFERRO. That's why they call me eccentric. There's nothing so strange as the truth. A—I keep thinking you're beautiful and then I see that you aren't. That's a pity. You should have been. [*He comes closer to* MINNIE, *staring at her through his glass much to her painful embarrassment.*] Oh, I'm not talking about your nose. What have you done or not done that has kept you from being beautiful?

MINNIE. Oh nothing could have made me beautiful.

TALIAFERRO. *Ah*—fear. That's what it is—*fear*. I get that. What are you afraid of? Don't you feel your own greatness?

MINNIE. Oh I'm not a great person.

TALIAFERRO. Ah, my dear lady, the most commonplace of us have greatness in us but we don't know

how to use it. The great truth of life is shut up in us tight and we go on like apes—imitating each other—instead of giving out—*out* the something which is in each one of us quite different from in any other. The naked truth of *any* soul is important. Tell me—have you killed something which should have lived? Oh I don't mean details. I'm not interested in facts. Have you stifled something which might have been a real contribution to life?

MINNIE. I've never even dared to think of it like that.

TALIAFERRO. But you *do* think it.

MINNIE [*With a sudden passionate appeal*]. But is it *true?* Have we all something to give which matters whether we give it or not?

TALIAFERRO [*Responding instantly with tenderness and understanding*]. We have *ourselves*—that inner-self which is trying to break through. Have you never listened? Have you never let it speak to you? Have you never let it tell you your own power?

MINNIE. Do you mean what you're saying? I mean—do you *really mean it?*

TALIAFERRO [*Becoming bombastic again*]. There you are! We're so used to empty words that do nothing but *hide* us. Why should I speak to you at all if not to try to reach the *real* person in you. You don't show me what you are for fear I'll think it worthless. *I'm* the modest person. I give you all I am—out—open—naked.

MINNIE. It must be wonderful to feel that way.

TALIAFERRO. It is indeed. Why don't *you?* Why don't you let go?

MINNIE. I don't know how. I didn't know I ought to.

TALIAFERRO. You haven't tried.

MINNIE. But how can I? How can I try without being ridiculous?

TALIAFERRO. Why not be ridiculous and be alive? You've shut yourself in with fear. Is that all there is to you?

MINNIE. There might have been something else. Is it my fault that there isn't?

TALIAFERRO. Oh the *might-have-beens!* How we like to blame them.

MINNIE. *Could* there have been great love and great music in me—or have I only imagined it?

TALIAFERRO. Imagination, dear lady, is creation. You haven't used your imagination strongly enough. Great love and great music are magnificent ambitions. You're either seeing yourself too large or too small. Free yourself—*free* yourself and find out the truth. If you've *let* things overpower you—for instance if you've let this commonplace man command you to come and play for him——

MINNIE. What commonplace man?

TALIAFERRO. Smith.

MINNIE. Oh—*he* isn't commonplace.

TALIAFERRO. You see!—You've let his belongings overshadow you. You've let——

DOLLY [*Coming into the entrance*]. Hello Tollie. [DOLLY *is extremely smart and alert and sure of herself, but her conceit is very good-natured and comfortable for others. She is followed down the steps by* GEORGE CADWALADER, *her husband.* GEORGE *is not*

so sure but he's large and pleasant and altogether a very desirable person to have about.]

TALIAFERRO. Hello, Dolly. Hello, George. [*Leaving* MINNIE *and going up to shake hands with the others.*]

GEORGE. Hello. How are you?

DOLLY [*Looking about*]. My God it *is* big, isn't it?

TALIAFERRO. Yes, it would be.

DOLLY. It's a scream. It makes me feel like a peanut.

GEORGE. Shut up, Dolly. Good idea if something *could* make you feel a little smaller.

DOLLY. Where is he? Where is our royal host?

TALIAFERRO. I believe he's jumping into something comfortable.

DOLLY. Oh, *is* he? I don't see anything comfortable here to jump into. Awful! [*Sitting in the large chair.*] Is Frances here?

TALIAFERRO. I haven't seen her.

DOLLY. She'll make an entrance, of course. I wouldn't miss seeing Frances come down those steps for the first time for anything on earth. Doesn't the house look as if he had built it for her? How she will drape herself around it! Are you going to paint him?

TALIAFERRO. I'm n-o-t sure. I haven't found the real man yet.

DOLLY. That's easy. He's a dear sweet disgustingly rich thing who doesn't know what to do with himself. When I think how divinely delightful George would be with this money, it makes me positively ill.

GEORGE. Shut up Dolly.—Do you think we're expected?

TALIAFERRO. [*Laughing as he stretches comfortably on a seat*]. I'm sure I don't know whether you are or not.

DOLLY. Of course we are.

GEORGE. I think we got the wrong date.

DOLLY. Of course we haven't. George is bored stiff because I made him come. It's a splendid chance for him to make an impression. There's no telling what Mr. Smith might do if he really knew George.

TALIAFERRO. No—there's no telling.

GEORGE [*Discovering* MINNIE]. Shut up Dolly. You're not the only person in the you know.

MINNIE [*Smiling bravely and coming forward*]. My name is Minnie.

DOLLY [*Looking at her and laughing*]. Oh is it really? How do you do?

MINNIE. I mean Whitcomb. Minnie isn't my name at all. I don't know why I said that.

TALIAFERRO. No it couldn't be. Minnie's much too mincing for you. I seem to see you on a *large* scale somehow. Minerva—possibly yes.

MINNIE. Oh that is my real name.

TALIAFERRO. Ah yes—I got that.

DOLLY. I notice you get most things after you've been told, old dear.

TALIAFERRO. Well, that's more than most people do at that.

DOLLY [*Laughing again*]. That's so all right—my friend. Do you see yourself on a large scale? [*Smiling impertinently at* MINNIE.]

MINNIE [*Not quite sure whether she's being laughed at or treated with very kind attention*]. Oh dear no. Oh no, no.

TALIAFERRO. She doesn't see herself *at all.* She doesn't know anything about herself.

MINNIE. I only know I'm not what I'd like to be.

DOLLY. And what would you like to be?

MINNIE. I'd like to be—Oh, I don't think I could tell you.

WILLIE [*Rushing in and down the steps*]. *So* sorry. I didn't know you were here. [*He gives a sharp questioning look at* MINNIE *which sends her back into shyness again.*] How are you, Cadwalader? Awfully glad to see you. How are you, Mrs. Cadwalader? [*He shakes hands with great dash.*]

DOLLY. I'm mad about the house. It looks *just* like you. I could have told it was yours with my eyes shut.

WILLIE. Think so? I'm glad to hear you say that. I've tried to keep it simple and homelike.

DOLLY. Yes, it's about as homelike as the Metropolitan Museum. Come, come don't be swanky. You know you're bursting with pride and I'm so envious I simply can't bear it. Life's too dreadful. George is so magnificently clever and nobody knows it. Speak up, Georgie, and tell this great man how clever you are.

GEORGE. Shut up, Dolly. It's hot—don't you think?

DOLLY. George thinks it's hot. Do you think it's hot? Yes, we all think it's hot. Well—that's *that.*

WILLIE [*With great pride in his guests*]. It certainly is great to see you here.

[TALIAFERRO *is talking to* MINNIE *and* GEORGE *has gone over to them.*]

DOLLY. We brought our riding breeches. I hear you have the best stables on Long Island.

WILLIE. Oh—I can give you a fair mount. When will you ride? [*They go to look at the view from the window at L.*]

DOLLY. Early to-morrow morning if I can get George up.

GEORGE [*To* TALIAFERRO]. What do you think of the house? [*Speaking over Minnie's head as she sits on a bench.*]

TALIAFERRO. Oh, the *house* is all right.

GEORGE. What's wrong, then?

TALIAFERRO. It needs somebody in it who has some faint idea of what it's all about.

GEORGE. Wait till Frances gets in it.

TALIAFERRO. You think she's really going in for him, do you?

GEORGE. Of course. Why not? She couldn't let this go, you know.

MINNIE. Is that the lady who's coming?

GEORGE. Oh yes—she's coming.

TALIAFERRO. If she ever gets here. I want my tea. I presume that's waiting for her, too.

MINNIE. I suppose she's a very wonderful person.

TALIAFERRO. Oh yes, she is.

GEORGE. Oh yes, she is. [*Both men laugh.*]

MINNIE. You're *all* so wonderful.

GEORGE [*Forgetting Minnie*]. Any golf around —think?

MINNIE. I say I think you're *all* so wonderful.

TALIAFERRO. Oh, there's sure to be. [*Not listening to Minnie.*]

GEORGE. I'd like to go over to Piping Rock tomorrow if there isn't anything nearer.

MINNIE. I say you're——

TALIAFERRO. He probably has eighteen holes right here on his own place. He wouldn't miss that.

GEORGE. Will you tell me anything he hasn't got?

TALIAFERRO. Everything but a yacht I believe. I'm told he isn't a good sailor.

MINNIE [*Turning from one to the other*]. No, he never did like the water.

GEORGE. And it hasn't occurred to him yet to have one for other people.

MINNIE. I say he never did—

TALIAFERRO. I beg your pardon! Were you saying something to me? [*Bending over her elaborately.*]

MINNIE. I say he never did like the water. But I'm sure if he knew his friends wanted a yacht he'd have one. [*Both men laugh.*] He is so *very, very* generous and thoughtful for other——

TALIAFERRO. There she is.

[*They all turn.* FRANCES SYLVESTER *is in the entrance.*]

FRANCES. Oh, how marvelous! I can't come down yet. I must stop and drink it in.

DOLLY. This is a purple moment!

[MRS. SYLVESTER *is tall and extremely slender—both of which are exaggerated by the very clinging and*

sweeping effect of her clothes. She is frankly made up—her good points embellished and her bad ones made assets. She is outree—fascinating, exotic, unnatural, and courageous enough to get her effect.]

TALIAFERRO. Don't move. It's delightful. We said you'd do it.

FRANCES. Oh you dear people! *Do* I look well here?

DOLLY. Not quite so well as you *think* you do, darling—but very well indeed.

GEORGE. You're stunning, Frances. Never saw you look better. Come on in—the water's fine.

FRANCES. Do come and take my hand from here, Mr. Smith. You haven't said a word to me.

WILLIE [*Going up to take her hand*]. I can't think of anything good enough to say.

FRANCES [*Still holding his hand as she comes down the steps*]. How sweet you are! Don't laugh at me. But I don't want to *speak*. I don't want to say a word. I just want to *feel* it. There is *nothing* that so moves me as wonderful old houses. They're full of the past. They speak to me.

GEORGE. This is a brand new one. There aren't any spooks here.

FRANCES [*Putting her hand on* WILLIE'S *arm*]. There! You see how much feeling it has. I quite forgot it wasn't old. It quite moved me. This room does something to me. I can't tell you just what——

[*She stops at the center posing effectively.*]

MINNIE [*Moving forward impulsively*]. It did to me, too. I know what you mean.

FRANCES. Oh—what have I been saying? I thought we were alone.

WILLIE. Don't you know Miss Whitcomb?

FRANCES. You know I don't, you wretch, and you've let me go on so. I hope you're a very frank person yourself, Miss Whitcomb. What did the room do to you?

MINNIE. It made me feel as though something more than just people ought to be here. It made me feel that unseen things ought to be seen here.

WILLIE [*As Simpson and Reynolds appear*]. Here's the tea. Will you serve it, Mrs. Cadwalader, please?

[*They forget* MINNIE *and turn their attention to the very magnificent tea.*]

DOLLY [*Going to the tea table*]. I suppose you ask me because you think I'm older than Frances. I'm *not!* That's the worst of having a husband in evidence —a divorced woman seems so much younger.

FRANCES [*Seating herself elaborately and then realizing that* MINNIE *is staring at her*]. What is it? Why do you look at me like that?

MINNIE. Because you are so beautiful.

DOLLY. How do you take your tea, dear?

FRANCES. Oh I don't know that I want anything so ordinary. I just want to sit and dream that I'm in Italy again.

DOLLY. Careful of your dreams, old dear. Here, give this to her. [*She fills a cup.*] How do you take your tea—Miss a—Minnie?

MINNIE. Oh just—a—anyway—just anyway.

DOLLY [*Trying not to laugh*]. I'm laughing at *you*, George. You look so funny today somehow.

GEORGE [*Having given a cup to* FRANCES *and going back to the tea table*]. Yes I suppose I do—but control your mirth long enough to give her a lump of sugar.

DOLLY [*Putting the sugar in the cup which is for* MINNIE]. And about four for you, I s'pose, Tollie? I wonder why men take so much sugar in their tea. Has anyone ever thought about it?

TALIAFERRO [*Trying to be heard above the others as they all talk at once*]. Oh—yes. I have given it deep thought. But it's so profound a subject that I must deliberate further.

[GEORGE *strolls over to* MINNIE *with a cup of tea—munching a sandwich as he goes. He stands before her, about to give it to her, but becomes interested in what the others are saying and finally drinks the tea himself.* MINNIE *having reached for it timidly several times gives it up and she is forgotten as she sits watching wistfully.*]

FRANCES. How are you going to paint Mr. Smith, Tollie?

TALIAFERRO. I haven't decided yet.

FRANCES. I wish you didn't have to put him in ordinary clothes. I hope you'll bring out the romance of it all.

DOLLY. Oh—have you had a romance, Mr. Smith?

FRANCES. Don't be stupid, Dolly. I mean the romance of what he's done—of how he's created this great house and filled it with the feeling and tradition of the old world. It's so significant—such a symbol of his character! I seem to see you as a knight—riding with the spirit of *beauty* as your herald.

GEORGE [*Chuckling and going for more tea*]. Put him on a horse, Tollie.

DOLLY. A *wingéd* horse.

SMITH. Don't kid me. I think Taliaferro will put me in a plain business suit as a plain, practical business man.

FRANCES. Horrors! *Never.* Tollie's too penetrating for that.

TALIAFERRO. It will be power, Smith—but not romantic.

DOLLY. You paint *souls*, don't you, Tollie darling?

FRANCES. Oh, I've just had the most inspiring experience of my whole life. You *must* go to this new man. He probed to the very depths of my being and *oh* the things we brought up out of my subconscious! I'm reborn. He's given me wings and flight. That's why this room affected me so—the space of it. I know now what I've been reaching for all my life. Oh what cowards we are not to tell the truth to ourselves! If we would only *use* our power, what Godlike creatures we could be!

MINNIE [*Who has been listening breathlessly*]. But how can we find that power? How can we be what we want to be?

FRANCES. By the help of these great men who are opening the doors for us and teaching us how to know ourselves.

TALIAFERRO [*To* MINNIE *with the fire of sincerity back of his artificial manner*]. You don't need *them.* Do it yourself. They *have* opened doors. They've made a great contribution—but the most important thing which is awakened in the world at the

moment is not *how* we can find our own power—the God within us—but the faith that it *can* be found. That's the thing that's alive in the masses—answering the cry of humanity—the faith that Divine power *is* in us all. It's coming in many ways—through many channels—under many names. It's breaking down old doubt and fear. [*He points at* MINNIE.] Until you *believe* you can *free* that thing that is pounding in you —it will stay shut up in you—torturing you. Until you *let* your soul speak through your music you will never have *lived.*

FRANCES. Oh—music? Is she a musician? Do play for us. That's what this room needs—to be filled with music.

DOLLY. *Do.* That will be a *great* relief. My soul needs relief and Heaven knows George's does.

TALIAFERRO. Play—*now.* [*He looks compelling at* MINNIE—*she rises and starts to the piano with inspiration.* WILLIE, *extremely nervous, takes a step between her and the piano. She looks at him, loses her confidence, slips on a rug and falls sprawling on the floor. They laugh—trying not to.* WILLIE *and* TALIAFERRO *go to* MINNIE *trying to get her up. The others go out into the hall, stifling their laughter.*]

TALIAFERRO [*As they get* MINNIE *to her feet.*] A little more faith, my dear. [*He is on the verge of laughing and goes off to the others.*]

MINNIE [*Overcome with humiliation*]. Oh, I'm so ashamed of myself, Willie. I wouldn't have done that for anything.

WILLIE. You surely weren't going to try to play for *these* people—were you?

MINNIE. Why—yes—I was. I thought you'd like me to. I thought that was one thing I *could* do for you.

WILLIE. I think it's just as well you fell down before you got there. They're only interested in the *best* in the world, you know. You don't seem to understand *yet* who they are.

MINNIE. Oh, they're wonderful.

WILLIE. I told you—you wouldn't know what they were talking about.

MINNIE. Yes, I know you did. I don't think I'll come to the table for dinner. I just don't think I can. I've got afraid somehow.

WILLIE [*Softening*]. I'm sorry. You do what you think best. I—I'm terribly sorry, Minnie. [*He goes out.* MINNIE *moves slowly to the piano and stands looking at it—her hands clenched desperately—an agony of appeal in her face . . .*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT II

SCENE I

The same room.

TIME: *Nine o'clock the same evening. Voices are heard and after a moment,* DOLLY, FRANCES, TALIAFERRO, WILLIE *and* GEORGE *come into the hall and slowly down into the room. They all talk at once—with an air of having dined well and being thoroughly contented with themselves. They are in evening clothes—*DOLLY *very chic and daring—*FRANCES *startling in a rather Oriental creation.*

DOLLY [*Finally heard above the others as she and* WILLIE *stand together*]. Has your musician gone under completely for the night, Mr. Smith?

WILLIE. Y-e-s, I think so. I don't think she'll be able to come down at all. She seemed extremely nervous.

DOLLY. I think you frightened her. She was paralyzed at the thought of playing for you. That's the worst of being a powerful personality—it wipes out everybody else. George is so impressed with you that he can't show off. He's really brilliantly clever you know—but when he starts to say anything to *you*, he thinks "Oh that isn't good enough"—and so he doesn't say it at all.

WILLIE. Oh Mrs. Cadwalader!

DOLLY. Do call me Dolly. And I *must* call you Bill. I'll burst if I don't.

WILLIE. You can call me anything on earth—just so it isn't Willie.

FRANCES [*Moving slowly to them*]. I shall call you William—William the conqueror.

WILLIE. William the *conquered* you mean.

DOLLY. Are you as great a lover as you are everything else?

WILLIE. Try me.

DOLLY. If it weren't for George, I would.

WILLIE. I don't see what George has to do with the case.

DOLLY. Then you're a *very* wicked man.

FRANCES. He's a very *mysterious* one. [*Gazing at him deeply as she waves her large feather fan languorously in his face.*] So many depths. Just as I think I understand him, I feel something elusive—further on.

WILLIE [*Almost blinking in the strong light of their bold adulation*]. Oh I—I think I'm a very plain simple person.

DOLLY. Yes. I expect that's what Napoleon said. By the way don't people tell you you are like Napoleon?

WILLIE. Oh occasionally.

FRANCES. I'm wondering if your mother thinks you are.

WILLIE. N-o—but *I* think *she* is.

DOLLY. Aren't we going to see your mother at all?

WILLIE. Oh I hope so. I hope so. She'll try to get down. It's very unfortunate this headache struck

her just now. But that's the way things happen. Isn't it?

DOLLY. How?

WILLIE. Why—just when you don't want them to.

FRANCES. Oh not with you. You compel things to happen.

WILLIE. I don't do much *compelling* with Mother.

DOLLY. Then she must be the only woman in the world who has resisted you. Oh coffee! [*She leaves them and goes up to the table where* REYNOLDS *and* SIMPSON *are putting the coffee, liquors and whiskey. She calls to* TALIAFERRO *and* GEORGE *who cross to her. There is general talk for a moment.* WILLIE *gives* FRANCES *a cigarette. They stroll to the center as he lights it for her.*]

FRANCES. I'm afraid I'm almost jealous of Dolly.

WILLIE. Why?

FRANCES. Jealous of her audacity—I can see you like it.

WILLIE. You don't think for a minute—I——

FRANCES. You see how frank I am. I've never known anyone who made me want to be as limpidly clear and simple as you do.

WILLIE. Oh! Mrs. Sylvester!

[DOLLY *laughs as she and the two men stroll out onto the balcony at right. Their voices are heard for a moment.*]

FRANCES [*Sitting on a bench below the piano as* REYNOLDS *brings two cups of coffee down to them on a small silver tray*]. No.

WILLIE. Oh! won't you?

FRANCES. No!—no thank you.

WILLIE. Then I won't.

FRANCES. I don't want to be *over* stimulated when I am with you. [WILLIE *laughs.*] Do you know—there isn't anything I couldn't say to you. And there's nothing you could say to me that I wouldn't understand. It's so wonderful to feel that way about a *man.* After the two tragic disappointments in my life—of disillusion and despair—after one has given and given—and found nothing but emptiness and treachery—it's very wonderful to trust a man and feel that he is your *friend.*

WILLIE [*Sitting beside her on the bench*]. That's *fine.*

FRANCES. To understand and to know one is understood—to speak out one's innermost thoughts without restraint—to lay one's self bare—well, that's *living* isn't it?

WILLIE. Yes—I s'pose it is—but it's all new to me—this honesty and freedom business. You've thrown a new light on things entirely. Opened things up for me.

FRANCES. I'd rather hear *that* than anything in the world. If I *have* helped you to know your inner spiritual power then *I* have done something wonderful *too*—William.

WILLIE. But it's awfully hard for me to believe—that—well that I *have* got something great in me. This God in me—I—well—it's *new* to me.

FRANCES. That's the modesty of a great nature.

WILLIE. It's awfully nice of you to say that. But power doesn't amount to much unless we get what we want with it.

FRANCES. But *you* have everything *you* want.

WILLIE. Not everything.

FRANCES. What else could you want?

WILLIE. I think you know what I mean.

FRANCES. No—you must tell me. You must be as frank and open as I am.

WILLIE. I want what money can't buy. I want something that holds itself high—something rare and——

FRANCES. Yes?

WILLIE. And as beautiful as you are.

FRANCES. Oh—that is the most——

TALIAFERRO [*Coming in from the balcony*]. Aren't you coming out to look at the moon—you two?

FRANCES. Oh Tollie, you came at the wrong time.

TALIAFERRO. Shall I go away?

FRANCES. No you've broken the spell. Is there a liqueur there?

WILLIE. What will you have?

FRANCES. Nothing less than nectar.

TALIAFERRO [*To* FRANCES *as* WILLIE *goes to get the liqueur*]. Not a fatal interruption, I hope. I should *be sorry to*—[FRANCES *stops him with her fan. They smile comfortably and understandingly at each other.*] You have an air of great contentment, Frances, that is very becoming. I'm sure your soul is purring softly.

FRANCES [*With a beatific smile*]. Beauty warms one, doesn't it?

TALIAFERRO. You should be very grateful to Mrs. Sylvester, Smith.

WILLIE [*Bringing the liqueur to Frances*]. Grateful? I am.

TALIAFERRO. I mean for what she does to your house. She takes away the crudities and fills it with softness and grace. She gives it a raison d'etre.

WILLIE. Oh, yes! Yes indeed. Yes *indeed!*

FRANCES. Don't listen to him, William. He's laughing at me because I'm like a kitten in the sun when I'm surrounded with things that please me.

WILLIE. Well, it must be very evident how pleased I am to see you here.

TALIAFERRO. That's putting it rather mildly, isn't it? It was inevitable that she should be here. You don't forget that it was in my studio you two met, do you?

WILLIE. Oh no—certainly not. At least I don't.

TALIAFERRO. I foretold this then. I saw you take stock, each of the other, and say "Here at last is something that satisfies me."

FRANCES. Oh, Tollie you embarrass me.

TALIAFERRO. Don't be commonplace, Frances. Aren't you big enough to speak honestly of a great attraction—a great harmony that was fulfilled when you two met and looked and understood?

DOLLY [*Coming in from the balcony, followed by* GEORGE]. The moonlight is ravishing out there. George has just kissed me passionately on my left ear.

GEORGE. Shut up, Dolly.

DOLLY. That's all I'm going to tell. George is so shy. He's afraid somebody will know I do still move him passionately. It flatters me awfully. In fact it's the most flattering thing that can possibly happen to a woman—for her husband to be in love with her. Isn't that so, Tollie? Now if *you* were indecently mad

about me I should know it was only novelty, but for *George* to go on year in and year out——

GEORGE. Oh I say—nobody gives a hang about that, you know.

DOLLY. I think it's a very thrilling topic of conversation. Don't you, Tollie?

TALIAFERRO. Entirely unnatural.

DOLLY [*After laughing at* TALIAFERRO]. I want to dance. Do you dance well, Bill? *Bill* do you dance well—with rhythmic abandon? That's what I should have been—a dancer. That's when I express myself—when I dance.

TALIAFERRO [*As he watches her dance about*]. I should like very much to see you express yourself, Dolly. Too bad we have no music. Too bad your musician failed you, Smith.

DOLLY. Too bad she fell down—so to speak. [*They all laugh.* GEORGE *gives himself another generous whiskey and soda.*]

GEORGE. I thought she was going to be nothing less than Paderewski when she started for the piano—and when she began to fall—I—thought she would never stop.

[*They all laugh again immoderately.* TALIAFERRO *stops seeing* MINNIE *at the entrance. The others turn to look at her and stop laughing, staring at her in wonder. She is the same* MINNIE *in the same blue dress with a new and luminous quality shining within her. The lines of the dress are long and flowing—falling away from her arms and shoulders—leaving her body quite free and well defined. Her hair is lifted into a more important line on her head. She stands*

and moves with grace and beauty—her voice has the vibration of conviction.]

MINNIE. You're still laughing at me. I *was* funny and oh—so stupid to be a coward in all this freedom and beauty and understanding.

[*They watch her in amazement as she comes down the steps.*]

GEORGE [*In a low voice*]. Good for her! She's had a drink.

TALIAFERRO. *No!* You don't understand.

WILLIE [*Nervously—to* MINNIE]. You'd better go back upstairs till you feel better.

MINNIE. Oh no—I can't go *back—now.* [*To* TALIAFERRO.] As you said, what difference does it make whether we're ridiculous or not—so long as we're alive?

TALIAFERRO. Quite so.

FRANCES. What *does* she mean?

MINNIE. I want to play for you. [*She goes to the piano.*]

WILLIE. Minnie—don't, don't try.

MINNIE. Oh, Willie, don't be afraid for me now.

TALIAFERRO. No one can help you—or harm you—but yourself.

[*There is a pause. She begins to play—slowly, softly, a little uncertainly. They watch her tensely. She gains in sureness, and plays with inspiration—her courage mounting as the power and beauty of the music accumulate. She finishes in a crescendo of abandon.* DOLLY, TALIAFERRO *and* GEORGE *all shout bravo, applauding with excitement, exhilarated and honestly thrilled.* FRANCES *doesn't like it—the lime-*

light being taken off herself. WILLIE *is stupefied and extremely nervous as to what is coming next.* TALIAFERRO, DOLLY *and* GEORGE *surround* MINNIE *all talking at once.*]

DOLLY. I never was so thrilled in my life.

GEORGE. It was perfectly ripping you know. By Jove it was.

TALIAFERRO. That was a magnificent mastery. You have destroyed the things which were destroying you. [*They go on talking to her—she still sits at the piano listening to them with childlike happiness and gratitude.*]

GEORGE [*Going back to* FRANCES *and* WILLIE]. What do you make of it? At first I thought she was lit. And now I don't know whether she is or not.

WILLIE. Certainly not. Certainly *not.* She's not a drinking person.

GEORGE. But that's just the kind that——

DOLLY [*Coming to them—leaving* TALIAFERRO *bending over* MINNIE]. Did you ever see anything so thrilling in your life? Who is she, Bill? *What* is she?

WILLIE [*His fear giving way to pride*]. Did you enjoy it?

DOLLY. Tollie thinks he has performed a miracle of course.

GEORGE. *Some*body did. Something happened somewhere.

FRANCES. Oh, *I* see! William did it this way as a surprise for us. It was so clever of you to have made us think she was a failure at first. It makes her seem so much better now. Doesn't it? What?

DOLLY [*Looking at* WILLIE]. Is that it? Who *is* she?

WILLIE. You—you must guess.

TALIAFERRO. She's going to play again.

MINNIE [*Radiantly*]. What shall I play?

GEORGE [*Who has had enough to drink by this time to free his soul somewhat*]. Play something for *me*. Play my kind of music. Do you know this? [*He plays a few bars.* MINNIE *catches the air and goes on with it.* GEORGE *sings—getting courage as he goes—*DOLLY *urges him on, singing the refrain with him until he and everyone in the room, except* FRANCES, *have let go with complete abandon.*

EXPRESS YO'SE'F MY CHILE

When I was a chile, my mammy say
"Hush yo' mouf—go 'long an' play
Don' you fuss nor fret nor cry—
You can be good ef you des try.
*Sup*press yo'se'f my chile.'—*Sup*press yo'se'f."

But now dey say to a li'l chile
"Laf and holler, sing an' cry.
What you don' wan' do don' eben try.
When you feel like yellin'—yell like hell—
*Ex*press yo'se'f an' do it well:
*Ex*press yo'se'f my chile.—*Ex*press yo'se'f."

When I wus young an' growin' tall
Dey say "You a chile—you don't know all.
You gotta wait an' listen an' grow.
You too young an' in'cent to know.
*Sup*press yo'se'f my chile.—*Sup*press yo'se'f."

Now dey say to a gal right out—
"Speak up plain what you t'inkin' bout.
What you feelin' let fo'kes know.
Don' hide nothin' an' say 'taint so.
*Ex*press yo'se'f my chile.—*Ex*press yo'se'f."

"Let all yo' emotions rise to de top.
Ef you got convolutions don't let 'em stop."
Dat's what dey say to a gal now-days.
Express yo'se'f is de latest craze.
*Ex*press yo'se'f my chile.—*Ex*press yo'se'f."

(The words of this song have been copyrighted in the name of RACHEL CROTHERS.)

[*George seizes* MINNIE'S *hand and* DOLLY'S—DOLLY *takes* TALIAFERRO'S—TALIAFERRO *takes* FRANCES'S. *They dance in a circle around* WILLIE—*laughing and singing "Express Yo'se'f my Chile," dragging* FRANCES *with them.* WILLIE *doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.*]

FRANCES [*Breaking away as* GEORGE *finishes with a whoop*]. Stop! It hurts me.

GEORGE. Let us be happy. [*He begins a faun like dance by himself.*] Let us be free! Who's afraid of the truth? Not me! Not me! [*They all shout with laughter except* FRANCES.]

DOLLY. Didn't I tell you George is a great man? If you only would release your soul, Georgie! So other people could see the greatness coming out!

FRANCES. I rather think this has gone too far.

TALIAFERRO. On the contrary we haven't gone far enough. We've had a moment of exaltation—when we felt the touch of strange wings—but we don't keep it. We let it go.

MINNIE. But *can't* we? Can't we keep it?

TALIAFERRO. *Ah!*—when we have learned to do *that*—we have learned all things. If you can *keep* the thing that made you play—you are a great artist.

MINNIE. It isn't the *playing* that matters so much, is it? But finding the thing that made me do it.

TALIAFERRO. Quite so. *Quite so.*

MINNIE. Oh Willie—you haven't found it, have you?

WILLIE [*Very nervously*]. What do you mean?

MINNIE. That innermost power.

WILLIE. Never mind now. You're excited.

MINNIE. But you're doing yourself a great wrong. You aren't letting them see what you really are.

WILLIE. Don't say any more now.

MINNIE [*Shaken with a great emotional excitement which she tries to control*]. Can't you see that they don't *know* you? That you're hiding yourself and letting them think——

WILLIE. Don't—*please.*

MINNIE. Then I'll go. I can't stay and not say it. I don't want to be shut up again. It's too wonderful to be free just for a little while. [*She smiles back at them wistfully as she goes off.*]

DOLLY [*After a pause*]. Am I mad—or is she?

TALIAFERRO. We're still children playing with a great fire.

FRANCES. What did she mean?

DOLLY *and* GEORGE [*Singing softly*]. "Express you'se'f my chil'. Express you'se'f."

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

SCENE II

TIME: *Immediately following Scene I.*

PLACE: WILLIE'S *bedroom. This room also shows the hand of the decorator. It is empty and correct. The bed being the main feature—large and important —on a dais.* WILLIE, *still in his evening clothes, comes quickly in from the hall. He lights a cigarette and begins walking about nervously. There is a knock at the hall door.*

WILLIE. Come.—My God!

[MINNIE *rushes in quickly. She wears a very wholesome blue dressing gown. Her hair is in a braid and tied with a blue ribbon. There is about her a childlike abandon.*]

MINNIE. Oh Willie—Willie—I can't keep still any longer.

WILLIE. What are you doing here? Go back! Go *back!*

MINNIE. I've *got* to talk to you. You're in danger and you don't know it.

WILLIE. You can't do this. Go back to your room.

MINNIE. You've got to hear the *truth.* You must listen to it.

WILLIE. What's the matter with you? You're excited. These people have stirred you up till you don't know what you're saying.

MINNIE. Oh yes, I do.

WILLIE. No you don't. Everything you did and said downstairs was pure excitement. Now you go and get into bed and cover up and——

MINNIE. But Willie I want to help you. You need it just as much as I did. You don't see. You don't *see* your danger. You're hiding your real self. You're not letting these people know what you are at all.

WILLIE. Never mind that. I tell you you can't stay here. Come on, now, and get to—— [*Trying to get her to the door.*]

MINNIE. Wait—*please!* Don't try to fight the truth, Willie. It's in yourself. Let it come out.

WILLIE. Nonsense, Minnie! You're flighty. I told you you wouldn't understand anything they said.

MINNIE. But I *do.* I understand it better than anything I ever heard in my life. They've opened the door for me. *I'm* reborn too. Don't you see? They've given *me* wings and flight and space too.

WILLIE. Stop it! *Stop* it, I say. It's upset you. You've lost your head.

MINNIE. I've just *found* myself. You told me they were something beyond—and different, but I didn't know how marvelous they are. That wonderful man the artist, has made me *free*, Willie—*free!*

WILLIE. Now ycu be careful. It's dangerous stuff to monkey with I tell you. *I* understand it. *I* know where to draw the line—but you let it alone. It's not good for you.

MINNIE. Didn't you hear me play?

WILLIE. Yes I did.

MINNIE. Didn't you see that all I've wanted to be —and all I've wanted to *do*—came out because—*at last*—I wasn't afraid? Didn't you hear it?

WILLIE. I did—and I was darned proud of you, too. There was something in your music I didn't know you had. The excitement loosened you up. It was *fine*. Now you go to bed and tomorrow we'll——

MINNIE. But it isn't the playing that matters. That's only one little part of it. It's what I can say to *you*—now. I'm not afraid to say things that there isn't anyone else *to* say—and things that—that your life and your happiness and your—your *everything* depend on.

WILLIE. All right—all right—wait till morning and say them. You can get the whole business out of your system then.

MINNIE [*Desperately*]. They *can't* wait.

WILLIE. Now—now—you're getting excited again. If you don't go back to your room, I'll call Mother.

MINNIE. It's *got* to be said before you see these people again—before you see Mrs. Sylvester. Oh, Willie, she's so beautiful and wonderful! Don't lose her.

WILLIE. *Lose* her? What do you mean?

MINNIE. You'll never hold her unless you give her more than she's ever had before.

WILLIE. Of course I can give her more than she's ever *dreamed*——

MINNIE. Oh, I don't mean that. *That* won't hold her. It must be *yourself*, and it must be a bigger self than she knows you have.

WILLIE. What?

MINNIE. She'll get tired of *pretending* that you are a great man.

WILLIE. *What?*

MINNIE. You must show her that you really *are* one.

WILLIE. What do you mean?

MINNIE. Why don't you let her *see* what you are? Why don't you show her yourself—your true—your *naked self?*

WILLIE [*Jumping*]. For the Lord's sake! Some one will hear you!

MINNIE. Then you *would* be great. Then she *would* love you and respect you.

WILLIE. You're on the wrong track, Minnie, and all mixed up.

MINNIE [*Not paying any attention to his protests*]. Oh, I know so well why you want to be like them. You've wanted beauty all your life—and style and—and what they have. But you're trying to get it the wrong way. You're a *sham* now, Willie.

WILLIE. I am not. I am *not.*

MINNIE. And they know it. Everybody knows it, but you.

WILLIE. Ho—*I* know what they think of me. I know. They think I'm a big person—*all* of them.

MINNIE. They're making a fool of you. [*Stamping her foot at him.*]

WILLIE. You can't say that to me!

MINNIE. Yes, I can—and this is *why* I can say it. [*She sits on the side of* WILLIE's *bed in complete unconsciousness but much to his amazed discomfort.*] When I did that awful thing—when I failed and fell

down and humiliated you—I thought I could never live and face you again. I came upstairs and said "If there *is* anything in us that has any power—come out and save me *now!*" And it *did*, Willie. It did. Something deep, deep, deep down came out and spoke to me—and told me the truth. It told me that everything that has ever happened to me is my own fault because I've been a coward all my life—a weak, miserable, little coward—afraid to live—afraid to give what I had to give. No wonder you got tired of me. It was my fault—not yours.

WILLIE. Oh now—Minnie——

MINNIE. I never let even you see the things I should have shown to you because I was afraid. And that's what you're doing now—you're hiding your best self because you're afraid it isn't what she wants.

WILLIE. I know you mean well—but you don't understand. Now you can't stay here a minute longer, I tell you, and I mean it. You—[*Hustling her toward the door*].

MINNIE. Willie, this isn't *me* talking—not the outside everyday me. I may never have the courage to say this again. I know better than—than anyone else in the world how fine and sweet you are. I know how you tried not to hurt me when you told me you just *had* to go away—out—into another world.

WILLIE. That's damned nice of you, Minnie.

MINNIE. And now that you've almost got what you've always wanted, I don't want you to lose it.

WILLIE. Thank you for—that.

MINNIE. And don't you see you can hold her forever if you give her the *great* things?

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WILLIE. *What* things?

MINNIE. The things that are in your soul.

WILLIE. I'm not so sure she cares so much about my soul.

MINNIE. That's just what she's reaching for—groping for—trying to understand. You heard her say—"If we only weren't afraid of the *truth*—if we only knew our own power what God-like creatures we could be!" She——

[*There is a low knock at the hall door. They stop —startled.* MINNIE *is about to speak.* WILLIE *hushes her in frantic pantomime and pushes her into a shallow clothes-closet at the Right and locks the door. The knock is repeated.*]

WILLIE [*Trying to be cheerful and careless*]. Come. [*Another knock.*] Come in. Oh come *in.*

FRANCES [*Opening the door slowly*]. May I—just for a moment? [WILLIE *is too appalled to speak.*] I came to beg a cigarette—one of those delicious ones you gave me out of your own case. [*She comes into the room—leaving the door open—very exotic in her negligee—her bare feet in sandals.*]

WILLIE [*Very nervous about the open door*]. A—a——

FRANCES. Oh, the door. Do you want it shut? There! [*She closes it and leans back on it.*] It *is* cosier—Isn't it? *Oh*—aren't our personal rooms interesting! And how they do express us! This is absolutely *you*—strong and austere.

WILLIE. A—think so?

FRANCES. And the cigarette? They've quite spoiled me for anything else.

WILLIE. Oh—yes. Here they are. So glad you like them. [*Getting the case from his pocket.*] Take them. A—just take the case along with you.

FRANCES [*Laughing*]. Oh no. If I took them *all* and ran away it would spoil the *flavor* of just *this* one. There—thank you. [*Selecting one very daintily and putting the case back in* WILLIE'*s hand.*] And now—a light?

WILLIE. Oh—yes—I beg your pardon. [*He finds matches and lights one after several tries—fumbling with trembling fingers.*]

FRANCES. Thanks. [*She takes a long breath and blows the smoke playfully in* WILLIE'S *face. He coughs. She sinks luxuriously into the large chair.*] Oh what bliss! This is a *real* moment. Isn't it? Away from the stupid treadmill. You're so genuine yourself—it gives me a mad passion to obey *all* my impulses. I'm *trying* to get beyond petty hypocrisies and conventions—but it's awfully hard for a woman to be really free, isn't it? A man never knows quite how hard it is. There are such eons and eons of old prejudices, and ridiculous "don'ts" to live down—aren't there? But you do *so* understand. I knew if we were alone like this, it would help me. You know why I wanted to do it—to make us look into each other's eyes as two absolutely free—*equal* human beings—not as man and woman at all. Of course, I don't believe that sex *is* the basis of all things. Not at all—at all—*at all.* I believe the spiritual is the fountain—the source of life. [*Putting two fingers seductively on his wrist.*] That's why there *can* be this beautiful freedom between us.—Well—now *you* talk to

me. Say something new and revealing that I've never heard before.

WILLIE [*In an agony of embarrassment, but trying to live up to the situation*]. Well—I—I'm afraid you've heard everything there is to say.

FRANCES. No—not quite. Sit here—close—so nothing breaks the current of sympathy. [*Making him sit on the cushion at her feet.*] You were going to really talk when we were interrupted. I couldn't go to sleep without coming to ask you what it was. Shy deep natures like yours so seldom do express themselves. The language of the soul is as illusive—as intangible as *that.* [*Blowing a ring of smoke and pointing to it.*] If it isn't caught in the first magic moment it never tries again. That's why I came straight to you—for fear you'd think I didn't want to listen. I wouldn't have you think I'd closed the door to you for anything in the world. You said you wanted something. There's an unsatisfied longing in your eyes. What is it? Tell me.

WILLIE. A—I——

FRANCES. Oh don't be inhibited with *me.* Have you grown timid again?

WILLIE. Oh no. Oh no.

FRANCES. There *was* perfect harmony between us —till that strange woman came into the room. Then I felt a discord—something subtle and vague but very strong. Who is she? *What* is she? Why is she here with you now?

WILLIE. What? [*With a nervous glance towards the closet door.*]

FRANCES. I seemed to get something out of the

past—some link between you and her. Don't be afraid of hurting me. Tell me—whatever it is. I shall understand.

WILLIE. Well—a—I don't think I have anything in particular to say. That is—not just now.

FRANCES. Oh—Was I mistaken? I thought there was a sympathy between us—rare and exquisite.

WILLIE. There was. There *is*. Some other time I can talk better.

FRANCES. Did you mean what you said—or were you only being like other men?

WILLIE. I can't say—just now—what I meant. There's a good reason. A—I'll explain tomorrow.

FRANCES. I'm afraid there won't be a tomorrow. You *are* only a man—after all.

MINNIE [*Pounding on the door*]. Let me out, Willie. [*A pause. She rattles the knob.*] Let me out so you can tell her the truth. [*They rise and stand petrified for a moment.*] Let me out, Willie!

FRANCES. Oh! [*She rushes to the hall door in ignominious terror.*]

WILLIE [*Running after her and stopping her as she tries to open the door*]. Wait! Wait, I say. Don't you go!

FRANCES. That woman's there! How dare you let *me* come into this room!

WILLIE. Now wait!—You—I—She——

MINNIE [*Pounding on the door*]. Open the door, Willie!

[FRANCES *tries to get out the hall door.*]

WILLIE [*Keeping his hand on the door knob*]. Don't

you leave this room! You can't go 'till you understand.

FRANCES. What?

WILLIE. It isn't like it looks at all.

MINNIE. Why don't you let me out, Willie?

WILLIE. She knows you're here. You'd better stay or it will look queer.

FRANCES [*As majestically as possible*]. How dare you say that to me!

MINNIE. Open the door, Willie, so I can go away.

FRANCES [*Deciding to stay and bluff it out*]. Yes! Open it.

WILLIE. But you don't think——

FRANCES. *Open it!*

WILLIE [*Hurrying over to unlock the closet door*]. Now don't you go.

MINNIE [*Throwing the door open and coming out*]. *I'm* the reason he couldn't speak. *I* came on an impulse too, just as you did. But I'll go, and it will be as though it had never happened. [*She starts for the door.*]

WILLIE. Wait, Minnie. [*To* FRANCES.] You don't think——

FRANCES. How *dare* you let her come into this house with me and my friends!

MINNIE. Oh he didn't know I was going to do this. I came to tell him something so important it couldn't wait till morning, and when you knocked I did the stupid old thing of hiding. It always makes everything wrong to hide something doesn't it? I ought to have stood still right here and then you would have understood.

FRANCES. Don't let her speak to me! [*She starts to the door.*]

WILLIE. Wait! She didn't hide. I *put* her in there. It was a damned silly thing to do. I'm not used to women doing these things anyway. But she—It's all as straight as a string.

FRANCES. It's all loathsome and hideous!

MINNIE. Oh no—no—no—it *isn't!* You couldn't think anything wrong of Willie.

FRANCES [*To* WILLIE]. I might have *known* how common you are.

MINNIE. Oh, don't say that. He didn't know I was coming. He didn't even want me to stay. Let me tell you just exactly why I——

FRANCES. Don't speak to me. Don't *dare* to speak to me. [*To* WILLIE.] I ought to have known better than to come into this house. I shall leave as early as possible in the morning. [*She sweeps out. They stare at the open door.*]

MINNIE [*After a pause of amazement*]. She only said that because she's hurt and angry.

WILLIE. Common! She said I was common.

MINNIE. She didn't mean it. She was angry and jealous because somebody else was here. That's natural.

WILLIE. She said she ought not to have come into this house.

MINNIE. It's all my fault. I'll go and *make* her understand.

WILLIE [*Closing the door quickly*]. No you won't. You let it alone. The more you say the worse you make it.

MINNIE. But she's *got* to believe me.

WILLIE. How can you expect her to believe *you* any more than she expects you to believe *her?*

MINNIE. What?

WILLIE. She thinks you came for the same reason she did.

MINNIE. I did.

WILLIE. What?

MINNIE. She came to find your true self.

WILLIE. Oh fiddle-de-dee! She came to *get* me! By hook or by crook—she came to *get* me.

MINNIE. Willie, that's *base.*

WILLIE. Is it?

MINNIE. I heard every word she said. It was beautiful.

WILLIE. Lord, Minnie, don't you know *anything?* Nothing *any* of them said is what you think it is.

MINNIE. Oh!

WILLIE. Their wings and flight mean ego—ego—ego. They're expressing themselves all right and nothing *but* themselves—and living for themselves and getting what they want for themselves. The whole game is self.

MINNIE. You don't mean that.

WILLIE. She said she ought not to have come into this house. She'll be glad to get back into it. She'll *beg* to come back.

MINNIE. You're angry and petty now because she's hurt your *vanity.*

WILLIE. Taliaferro isn't sure he'll paint my picture in this house. He'll paint it where I *want* it painted.

MINNIE. Oh *don't!*

WILLIE. You think I'm only a cheap imitation of them. If I am they *need* me. If they've got what I want I've got what *they* want and they'll come to me and eat the dust to get it.

MINNIE. You're falling down, Willie. You're falling down. Pick yourself up again. Be big and go to her. You never needed to be so big in your life as you do this minute.

WILLIE. I don't give a damn whether I'm big or little.

MINNIE. This is twice I've humiliated you and disgraced you. It can't be. I'm going to get at her.

WILLIE. No you won't. [*They both speak at the same time—their voices rising together in excitement.*]

MINNIE. I'm going to *make* her believe me. I'm going to tell her everything.

WILLIE. Nothing on earth could make her believe you. She'll insult you again. I won't have it.

MINNIE [*Opening the door*]. You're not going to lose her because of anything I've done. That's too horrible. She sha'n't go out of this house. She *sha'n't*. I won't *let* her. [*Suddenly going back to him.*] Oh, Willie, you *are* a great man—you *are*—you've *got* to be. *Show* them you are. They don't appreciate you. Even your mother doesn't. They think your house is too big for you. You show them you're bigger than your house and more powerful than your money. There *is* greatness in you. *Get it out!* [*She shakes him vigorously by the shoulders and hurries out.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT III

Same as Act I.

TIME: *8 O'clock the following morning.*

REYNOLDS *is drawing back the curtains at the windows at Right and another footman at the Left. The* SECOND FOOTMAN *then goes up the steps and off center.*

After a moment MINNIE *comes into the hall wearing a simple sport frock and sweater. She stops to look back and listen, then comes down into the room.*

MINNIE [*With eager excitement*]. Mrs. Sylvester hasn't come down yet—has she?

REYNOLDS [*Turning with surprise*]. I beg pardon Miss?

MINNIE [*Going down into the room*]. Has a lady—A lady hasn't come down and gone away in a motor, has she?

REYNOLDS. No, Miss—but a car is waiting for someone.

MINNIE. Oh, that's all right.

REYNOLDS. Can I do anything for you, Miss?

MINNIE. No, thank you. [REYNOLDS *starts to the entrance as the* SECOND FOOTMAN *comes back from center entrance and* SIMPSON *from the right. The three men stop as* MINNIE *speaks.*] Oh— Are you the one who took both my notes to her?

REYNOLDS. Yes, Miss.

MINNIE. There're so many of you I didn't rec-

ognize you. She wouldn't go out any other way, would she?

REYNOLDS. Oh no, Miss. She's sure to come this way.

[*The* SECOND FOOTMAN *has smiled and* SIMPSON *has reproved him with a slight cough and a severe look and dismissed him with a nod. He goes off at left,* SIMPSON *at center.* REYNOLDS *goes up the steps* just as JEAN, *the maid to* FRANCES, *enters quickly from the left. She wears a neat black suit and small hat and carries a jewel case.*]

REYNOLDS. Is Madam coming down now?

JEAN. Yes.

REYNOLDS. Someone would like to speak to her.

JEAN. Madame will not wish to be stopped. [*She goes on out center with the intention of being very haughty.*]

FRANCES [*Coming into view in the hall dressed as in Act 1 and drawing on a pair of long gloves*]. You may send up for my luggage now and give this note to Mr. Smith. You understand? Give it to him *yourself.*

REYNOLDS [*Taking the note*]. Very good, madam. Someone would like to speak to you.

MINNIE [*Moving toward them*]. I've been waiting to——

FRANCES [*Quickly*]. Put this in the car. [*Giving her veil to the servant. He goes off with the veil.*]

MINNIE. I've been waiting to see you ever since——

FRANCES. Be careful. Why do you *persist* in trying to see me?

MINNIE. I must. I want to tell you——

FRANCES. I don't want to hear anything you have to say.

MINNIE. But you *sha'n't* go away thinking what you do. Let me tell you the truth about it all—everything—every way.

FRANCES. I shall see Mr. Smith in town. *He* will tell me the truth about it all.

MINNIE. But you mustn't blame *him* for anything. He had nothing to do with it whatever.

FRANCES. I can believe that. It's very obvious you have thrust yourself upon him. You tried to compromise him—*here*—before us all. I'm sure Mr. Smith is quite, *quite* guiltless—but I can't stay in the same house with you. I'm going without saying anything to anyone—to avoid a scene and a scandal. If my friends knew, they'd leave at once.

MINNIE. Then I must make them understand.

FRANCES. What?

MINNIE. I'll tell *them* what I did.

FRANCES. You won't.

MINNIE. Of course I will.

FRANCES. You *can't!* It would ruin you.

MINNIE. But I——

FRANCES. Don't say one word. Can't you see I'm protecting you by keeping still? No matter why you were there—for any reason on earth—you can't tell it. You can't tell you were *hidden* in his room. If you're stupid enough to try to get out of this by talking you'll damn yourself. If you——

DOLLY [*Coming down the steps followed by* GEORGE *and* TALIAFERRO. *They are all three in riding clothes.*] Oh, look who's here! Morning. Morning,

Minnie. I dreamed about you last night. So did George. What in the name of all that's holy are you doing down here in your hat at this ungodly hour, Frances?

TALIAFERRO. Good morning. How is the genius this morning? I thought we were the only ones up to greet the sun.

GEORGE. I bet you were never up so early in your life to greet anything, Frances. What's doing?

DOLLY. George is trying to act as though he's up because he wants to be. Taliaferro is only riding because it gives him an excuse to wear those clothes. Isn't he the glass of fashion?

GEORGE. In a molded form?

DOLLY [*Giggling*]. Georgie, you *are* witty—if you'd just let yourself go.

TALIAFERRO. But, for God's sake, *don't*, Georgie, I beg of you.

DOLLY. Everybody seems to be up and doing brave things but our host. Where is he?

GEORGE [*Looking at* FRANCES *as she pulls nervously at her gloves*]. Are you putting on your gloves to meet him, Frances?

TALIAFERRO. Do I smell a rendezvous?

DOLLY. An *elopement!*

FRANCES. Don't be silly. I'm rushing back to town with a wretched toothache.

DOLLY. What a beastly shame! What's the matter with you, Minnie? You look as if you had a heartache.

MINNIE [*Who has been waiting tensely for a chance to speak*]. I want to——

FRANCES. *No.*

DOLLY. What's the matter?

MINNIE. I want to tell you something I did last night.

FRANCES. She thinks she ought to and it isn't necessary, Mr. Smith and I know. That's quite enough.

DOLLY. It isn't quite enough till *I* know. What is it, Minnie? Tell it. It's sure to be thrilling. I dreamed you were going to play before all the great old masters and just as Mozart waved his hand for you to go to the piano—just like that—you started and stopped—and I was crossing my fingers and pushing you so hard I kicked George out of bed. That's why he's up now.

GEORGE. Shut up, Dolly. If you only would, you know, she might say something.

MINNIE. Last night I——

FRANCES. You *can't.*

DOLLY. Why does it mean so much in your life, Frances?

FRANCES. I'm trying to make her keep still for her own sake, of course.

MINNIE. But I *want* to tell them.

DOLLY. Then for goodness sake, do.

MINNIE. Last night I——

FRANCES. It's impossible. Don't you know Mr. Smith will be very angry?

DOLLY. Heavens, is it anything serious?

TALIAFERRO. Why shouldn't she tell it if she wants to?

GEORGE. Very dangerous to suppress your desires, you know.

TALIAFERRO. Don't check the thing which carried you to those heights last night. I can't imagine you doing anything now that hasn't a spark of inspiration in it—touched by the breath of the gods.

MRS. SMITH [*Who has come into the entrance in time to hear* TALIAFERRO]. I gathered from my son he was entertaining nothing less than gods and goddesses. That's why I hesitated to come down. Good morning.

DOLLY [*After they have all said good morning*]. But we knew you were there. We felt you in the background. A great man always has a great mother.

MRS. SMITH [*Coming down the steps*]. You don't have to say that kind of thing to *me* in order to make conversation.

DOLLY. But I love saying it. It's my spontaneous reaction to you.

GEORGE. Shut up, Dolly. [*Going to* MRS. SMITH *to shake hands.*] How do you do, Mrs. Smith. I'm George Cadwalader.

DOLLY. In other words my husband, and that is the infamous Taliaferro who is going to paint your son's portrait—or rather his soul.

MRS. SMITH. Have you persuaded *yourself* you can do that or only other people? [*Smiling drily at* TALIAFERRO.]

TALIAFERRO. Don't *you* think it can be done?

MRS. SMITH. No—I think even Willie may have a

little something in him which can't be seen with the naked eye.

TALIAFERRO. Ah—that's just it. I paint with a brush which is dipped in an inner vision. Wait till you see the portrait. Your son will be revealed to you.

MRS. SMITH. I hope it will reveal him to himself. Just at present I don't think he knows whether he's God—or a tadpole.

TALIAFERRO [*Laughing*]. The process of finding oneself always goes through confusion before it reaches harmony—doesn't it?

MRS. SMITH. Oh it does? Well he's been trying to confuse *me*, too. Trying to make me believe that just because somebody *wants* to do a thing it *ought* to be done.

TALIAFERRO. Don't you agree with that? Don't you believe in absolute individual freedom?

MRS. SMITH. It depends on the individual how much I believe in it. [*Turning her dry shrewd look at Frances.*]

FRANCES. Isn't someone going to introduce me? I'm Frances Sylvester.

MRS. SMITH. Yes, I recognize you.

FRANCES. Oh, have we seen each other before?

MRS. SMITH. I don't think you've seen *me*. I understand *you* are a great disciple of freedom.

FRANCES. Oh yes, I think it's the most important thing in the world—the complete and utter expression of oneself. I'm so sorry to have to hurry off now that you *are* down. I wanted to slip away without disturbing anyone. I thought no one would be down so early.

MRS. SMITH. I'm an early riser and a poor sleeper

myself. Last night I was *unusually* wide awake.

FRANCES [*Slightly startled*]. Oh—really?

MRS. SMITH. That's why I went in to see Willie so early this morning—to see how he could explain some of the—*freedom*—I seemed to feel in the air last night.

FRANCES. And *did* he? [*Looking very steadily back at* MRS. SMITH.]

MRS. SMITH. He did a good deal of talking—but he didn't explain much.

TALIAFERRO. If you felt something strange in the air last night, dear lady, you evidently got a vibration. Quite simple. Merely thought transference. A very remarkable thing happened here in this room. You must have felt something lifted—released.

MRS. SMITH. I certainly felt something *let loose.*

DOLLY. How frightfully interesting! You must have got George's vibration. It's colossal.

MRS. SMITH. A very remarkable thing happened in another room—too, last night. [*Looking at Frances.*]

FRANCES [*Beginning to be very uncomfortable but keeping her poise*]. You must be a bit of a mystic. You seem to be very psychic—so sensitive to conditions.

MRS. SMITH. I have very good hearing and eyesight—if that's what you mean.

DOLLY. What *are* they talking about?

MRS. SMITH. Oh—don't you know? I thought you *told* everything you do. Willie said openness was the point.

DOLLY. *Frances,* have you done something you don't want us to know?

MINNIE. Oh no, she hasn't. I can explain. Don't misjudge Mrs. Sylvester, Mrs. Smith.

FRANCES. I'm not in the habit of having what I do explained or judged or *misjudged.*

MRS. SMITH [*With a flash of anger which until now she has been able to control under her sarcasm*]. And I'm not in the habit of *any* of it. It *all* has to be explained to me.

MINNIE. But I was there all the time, Mrs. Smith. I went first.

MRS. SMITH. *What?*

MINNIE. I went to Willie's room to tell him something.

DOLLY. Oh!

MRS. SMITH. Minnie Whitcomb! Are you a plumb fool? What in the name of common sense did you do *that* for? [*Her righteous anger blazing at* MINNIE.]

MINNIE. I had to tell him something.

MRS. SMITH. There are twenty-two other rooms in the house. I s'pose you couldn't wait till morning and tell him in one of them.

MINNIE. No I couldn't. I *couldn't* wait till morning.

MRS. SMITH. You certainly were bitten with the new doctrine. It didn't take *you* long to release yourself.

MINNIE. It's the most important thing in the world to him. I had to tell him before he saw anyone else. While I was there—there was a knock at the door.

DOLLY. Oh! it's perfect!

MINNIE. We didn't know just what to do, so Willie put me in a cupboard and locked the door.

[*A shriek of laugher from* DOLLY, GEORGE *and* TALIAFERRO.]

FRANCES. I really don't know why we should hear this.

MINNIE. And then the other door opened and Mrs. Sylvester came in.

[*They stop laughing to look at* FRANCES.]

DOLLY. *What?* [*They laugh again.*] It's too good to be true! She's making it up.

TALIAFERRO [*Choking with laughter*]. And then what happened?

MRS. SMITH. Go on. Be open and frank and *free*, as Willie says.

GEORGE. Frances, what did *you* have to tell him that couldn't wait till morning?

[*Laughing so he can scarcely speak.*]

FRANCES. This is disgusting. I won't be discussed and criticized by vulgar narrow-minded ideas of convention.

DOLLY. Of course not, dear. What did you do it for—a joke?

MINNIE. Oh, no. It wasn't a joke. I could hear every word they said.

DOLLY. Oh!

[*They shout again.*]

MINNIE. Don't laugh, please. She came to——

TALIAFERRO. To what?

MINNIE. To help Willie express himself.

[*A still louder shriek of laughter.*]

GEORGE. Oh my God! And *did* he?

MINNIE. He couldn't because I was there. So I pounded on the door and told him to let me out.

DOLLY. *Never!* I can believe *anything* but that.

TALIAFERRO. You told him to let out the truth.

[*They are breathless and gasping.*]

MINNIE. *Stop laughing!* Mrs. Sylvester was angry. She didn't believe I was there for a good reason. [*To* MRS. SYLVESTER.] You said you felt something out of the past between Willie and me. There *was* something. When we were very young we were going to be married—but we weren't right for each other. He went away and I've never even seen him until now—when they asked me to come—just because they were kind. [WILLIE *comes into the entrance. No one sees him.*] I knew the moment I saw you, you were what he'd wanted all his life—but I knew you didn't appreciate him. He's big. He's wonderful. Oh he *is!* I told him he was throwing away his happiness by not letting you see how—how good he is. What if I did do it the wrong way? Why can't you believe me? [*Turning to the others.*] Can't you make her see it *couldn't* be what she thinks? [*To* FRANCES *again.*] Why *can't* you believe me? How can you help it? Why doesn't the truth in *you* see the truth in me? [*She sees* WILLIE.] Oh Willie—don't let her go. Try to make her stay. [*She rushes out to hide the tears which are beginning to get beyond her control. There is a quick response of sympathy from* DOLLY, GEORGE *and* TALIAFERRO, *trying to hold her back.* MRS. SMITH *furtively wipes a tear from her cheek.*]

DOLLY. She's a *darling!* She's a *lamb!*

WILLIE [*Coming down the steps and speaking with a very quiet firmness*]. This is a pretty good time to

put ourselves to the test—isn't it? To see if we know the truth when we hear it?

DOLLY. Oh, Bill, dear, don't worry. *We* believe in fairies.

TALIAFERRO [*Quite simply and with sincere feeling*]. And do we believe in the greatest of all things? Do we know when *that* has been in our midst?

FRANCES. I believe in *William*. Anger swept me away for a moment but that's gone. My higher nature has——

REYNOLDS [*Coming into the entrance*]. Pardon me, Madam. Your luggage is in the car.

FRANCES. Take it out again. [*With a magnificent gesture.*]

REYNOLDS. Very good, Madam. [*He goes out.*]

FRANCES. *I* understand why she did it, as no one else possibly can. It hurts me to see the rest of you so horribly material. It shows me you might even misinterpret what *I* did. [*She goes up the steps.*] I'm going back to my room now, William—but I shall want to see you in a *very* little while. [*She goes out.*]

DOLLY. Isn't she priceless! You've made a great conquest, Bill. I s'pose congratulations are in order. Let me be the first to kiss you. [*Going to* WILLIE *and kissing his embarrassed cheek*]. It's too gorgeous. So nice for George and me too. We're so fond of *both of you.* Usually we're awfully glad for one side and terribly sorry for the other. Come on fellows. Let's get started. [*Going up the steps and turning to* MRS. SMITH.] I congratulate *you,* Mrs. Smith on your daughter-in-law. She'll be so especially congenial to *you.*

Mrs. Smith [*After a slight pause*]. Shall I express *myself* now—Willie?

Dolly. Oh do.

Willie. I think it's about time for *me* to speak a little truth.

Dolly. Oh, we know how you feel, Bill. We've all been in love.

George. It's tough while it lasts. Come on, Tollie.

Willie. Wait a minute please. You've taken too much for granted. It isn't at all what you——

Dolly. It'll be all right, Bill. Keep your nerve.

Taliaferro. We know she *seems* the unattainable—above and beyond all other women. But she isn't.

Mrs. Smith. One of the *overtones*. I begin to see what that means now.

Dolly. Exactly. You won't judge her by the ordinary rules for ordinary mortals—will you, Mrs. Smith? Frances is living on too high a plane for that.

Mrs. Smith. It don't make much difference to me *what* she's living on—so long as Willie's pleased. He thinks she's a little too transcendental to be alive at all. Don't you Willie? [Willie *has turned away into the window irritated and baffled.*] Willie—you deaf?

Willie. No. I'm listening. I get you.

Mrs. Smith. Too bad Minnie blundered in and upset things a little. She's a simple thing.

Taliaferro. She intrigues me peculiarly. I'm going to stay and talk to her about her future.

Dolly. Oh not now.

TALIAFERRO. Yes now. Go on. I'm not coming. I may pick you up later.

DOLLY. You're a wretch. Come on, George. I 'spose I'll have to let you have the best horse.

GEORGE. By all means, darling. Why not?

[GEORGE *and* DOLLY *go.*]

TALIAFERRO. I have a strong sense of responsibility for her.

WILLIE [*A little aggressively*]. What do you mean by that?

TALIAFERRO. I have awakened her—roused her to a realization of her own power and what life may have for her if she will take it.

MRS. SMITH. Is he talking about *Minnie*, Willie?

WILLIE [*Not listening to his mother*]. Excuse me, but I don't know why you should feel *that*.

TALIAFERRO. Ah—don't you? And if you don't —why then you don't. I can't explain it.

WILLIE. You don't have to *explain* anything to *me* about Miss Whitcomb.

MRS. SMITH. Lord no! She's just one of those unfortunate women that's got nothing in 'em *to* explain.

TALIAFERRO. I presume you realize she has the potentialities of a great musician?

WILLIE. I'd much rather not discuss Miss Whitcomb's *potentialities* with anyone but herself.

MRS. SMITH. Why not, Willie? If the gentleman could do anything to help Minnie, it would be good. She's been helping *other* people to make music all her life.

TALIAFERRO. That's why her own pent-up song has gushed forth with such power.

Mrs. Smith. What?

Willie. You didn't hear her play last night, mother. My guests were astounded. They began to realize that a very extraordinary person is in the house.

Mrs. Smith. You don't mean *Minnie!*

Taliaferro. All she is—her soul, her mind—her sex—her love—have gone into that silent music. Something has happened to her sometime to make her think she could only stand by and look on at life.

Mrs. Smith [*Watching* Willie *out of the corner of her eye*]. What do you s'pose that could be, Willie? I've known her since she was a baby. Don't upset her with foolish ideas. Willie warned her. He told her she wouldn't understand your language—and you see—she's gone and taken you literally. She's spilled her soul right out on the carpet for you all to step on.

Taliaferro. Well—isn't that better than to go on crushing it and suppressing it as completely as she has been doing?

Mrs. Smith. I'm not so sure about that. If we were all running around without any *suppressions*, we might as well have tails again.

Taliaferro [*Laughing*]. I don't get a sense of much suppression on your part, dear lady.

Mrs. Smith. You don't! Well I'm suppressing more this minute than most people feel in a life time. If I was to let go now—God help Willie. [*She rises firmly and goes up the steps.*]

Taliaferro [*Laughing and following her*]. I think I recognize in you an individuality almost as natural

and untrammelled as my own. We ought to appreciate and understand each other.

MRS. SMITH. You flatter me. I don't even understand my own son. When you've painted that portrait I may be able to see some of these hidden mysteries. I'll tell Minnie to come right down—you want to talk to her. [*She goes up the steps.*]

TALIAFERRO. Yes—do please.

MRS. SMITH. And you keep your eye on her, Willie. You began it. You're responsible. Now that she's cut loose, there's no telling what she may do. Minnie's been bottled up a good many years. When she pops —look out. [*She goes off Left.*]

TALIAFERRO [*Going back to* WILLIE]. By the way —*about* your portrait. I've decided——

WILLIE [*Coming quickly toward* TALIAFERRO, a little *fiercely*]. What are you going to say to her?

TALIAFERRO. Well—I'm not going to make improper advances. At least not just *yet*. I shall paint you sitting because that won't show how short your legs are.

WILLIE. I've decided a few things about that portrait myself. My legs aren't quite so short as you think. What are you going to say to her?

TALIAFERRO. Well really! Is that a challenge? I may talk to a genius about her work and how to bring it before the world. May I not?

WILLIE. I don't know that Miss Whitcomb wants to be put before the world, and if she does *I'll* do it.

TALIAFERRO. But, my dear man, must I remind you that there are things that money can not do?

WILLIE. For instance?

TALIAFERRO. It can't open the doors of the holy of holies. I shall get an audience of musicians of the first rank—in my own studio.

WILLIE. I don't want her playing in *anybody's* studio. Besides an audience of musicians would be the worst thing that could happen to her. They'd tear her limb from limb.

TALIAFERRO. Ah—the artist listens with passionate appreciation—born of his own travail and agony and accomplishment. [MINNIE *comes into the entrance.*] Come in, dear lady. You have moved me profoundly—both your music and yourself. I am at your feet to serve you. [*He puts out both his hands to her. She comes down the steps and gives him her hands. He kisses them.*]

MINNIE. Oh! What does he mean, Willie?

WILLIE. I'm sure I don't know.

TALIAFERRO. You must be heard. You must give your great gift to the world—not bury it.

MINNIE. Do you mean you think I could do something with my music—out in the world?

TALIAFERRO. Isn't it pushing you—compelling you—screaming within you to be let out?

MINNIE. Yes—yes—it is.

WILLIE. I'm sure you mean well, Taliaferro, but you're going too fast. We'll have to weigh and consider it rationally, Minnie, before you decide anything.

MINNIE. Oh, Willie, you don't understand. [*Giving her hands to* TALIAFERRO *again.*] How shall I begin?

TALIAFERRO. You played last night with your soul. It was the supreme effort of your inner being

to make itself articulate. Serious faults and crudities —yes—of course.

WILLIE. Nonsense! I didn't see any faults.

TALIAFERRO [*To* WILLIE]. No—you wouldn't. [*To* MINNIE *again.*] You must get to the great teachers in Europe.

WILLIE. Ho! The great teachers can come over here to her. That's easy.

MINNIE [*Laughing*]. You funny little boy! You don't understand. [*To* TALIAFERRO.] If I had only known you before! So much time has been wasted.

TALIAFERRO [*Kissing her hands again*]. We don't measure life by time—but by living.

WILLIE. Would you like to take a walk or a drive, Minnie? It's a beautiful morning.

TALIAFERRO. A marvelous career lies in these beautiful hands if you are faithful to it.

MINNIE. I haven't anything else to be faithful to.

WILLIE. Now, Minnie!

MINNIE. It's like a miracle to have found you. You've made me alive! *I'm* not afraid *now* to give you all *I* have.

WILLIE. Be careful, Minnie,—you don't realize what you're saying.

TALIAFERRO. She is speaking the language of one artist to another. You don't understand.

WILLIE. Don't worry about what I don't understand. We'll talk about it all—later, Minnie.

TALIAFERRO. Do I get a slight suggestion that you would perhaps like to be alone with the lady? I'll go.

MINNIE. Oh! no! Don't.

TALIAFERRO [*Going up the steps*]. But I'll come back. There's enough for all of us pulling together in a long hard pull to get you where you want to go. Don't let anything destroy your faith in yourself. When your spirit falters, come to me. Let me give you strength out of my infinite belief in you. And above all things don't let the *commonplace* drag you down. Au revoir, dear lady. [*He strides out.*]

MINNIE. Isn't he wonderful?

WILLIE. He's a windbag. I never knew anybody who likes to hear himself talk so well. See here, Minnie, how much does this music business mean to you?

MINNIE. Everything.

WILLIE. Wouldn't you rather be happy as a woman than a successful musician?

MINNIE. This will be more than just happiness. Think of playing to hundreds of people—all at one time—making them hear what I've always heard—feel what I feel! Oh! *God*—how wonderful it will be!

WILLIE. Listen, Minnie. No matter how much of a success you are, you have to have somebody to take care of you.

MINNIE. Oh no. I'm not used to that. It would hamper me. I must be free. When I think of what I'm going to do, my heart pounds so I can't breathe. There's a singing in my veins—a throbbing.

WILLIE. Are you thinking of that man Taliaferro?

MINNIE. All the time.

WILLIE. Take everything he says with a grain of salt. Temperament—guff.

MINNIE. He's an artist. I trust him absolutely.

WILLIE. You can't trust *any* of 'em. They're all loose.

MINNIE [*Smiling at him*]. That will be so good for me. [*Suddenly growing serious.*] Oh, Willie—what if I *am* great—really and truly great? What if I *have* got the divine spark?

WILLIE. I wouldn't count on that. Very few of us have. See here—what ever made you think there was anything great in me?

MINNIE. It began when I was a little girl I 'spose —when we used to play in the barn and you were always the king.

WILLIE. But after I went away—did you—Did you still go on—Did you go on caring a little—in the old way?

MINNIE. Oh yes—I kept you with me. I had to have something. Every evening all these years we've met on the church steps in the same old way—under the clock. You said the things I wanted to hear you say. It was so real that if anyone passed I was proud that you were with me and not ashamed that you had forgotten me. If another woman went by with her husband or her lover or her baby I knew she had something of grief or disappointment in her happiness—while I had only the ideal of it all. Then when we stood up and you walked with me to the gate I went into the little empty house with something that made the next day easier—with places of great shining in it. You were noble and splendid. That's the way you've been to me always and when I came——

WILLIE. You saw I was only a conceited fool.

MINNIE. Yes.

WILLIE. What? You do think that—do you?

MINNIE. You'll get over it—if you're just honest, Willie. If you just tell the truth to yourself.

WILLIE. Well, by golly, the toothpaste is honest. There isn't an ounce of fake in it—and it's *me*—and it's going to get me what I want. If I can't be great you can. I'll advertise you from pole to pole and make you the biggest one of 'em all.

MINNIE [*Laughing*]. You sound like your old self now.

WILLIE. I'm going to take care of you, Minnie.

MINNIE. Oh, you don't need to do that.

WILLIE. Yes I do.

MINNIE. *No!* I can take care of myself. I always have.

WILLIE. I want to marry you.

MINNIE. *Oh*—be careful, Willie! We'll get into trouble again. [*Moving quickly away from him.*]

WILLIE. You belong to me, Minnie. You always did. You used to care. Why don't you now? I'm much more worth caring about now than I used to be.

MINNIE. Oh no, you're not. Not to me. For Mrs. Sylvester, yes. She *wants* you. You're just what she wants and she's just what you want.

WILLIE. What do *you* want?

MINNIE [*After a deep breath*]. To express myself.

WILLIE. You can express yourself and marry me too.

MINNIE. No I couldn't. I must be *free*. You don't understand, Willie. We speak a different language. My music—my art—my inner life don't mean anything to you.

WILLIE. Don't you fool yourself. I can keep up with you. Art's all very well for a little while—but in the long run nothing matters but love—love, Minnie. You want something to sit by the fire with.

MINNIE. But I've learned to do without love and the fire.

WILLIE. That's no reason you can't have it now. It's all the bigger when it does come. [*Taking her hands.*]

MINNIE [*Trying to get away*]. You mustn't, Willie.

WILLIE. Look at me.

MINNIE. No! I want to go. [*Backing away from him and sitting on the bench by the piano.*]

WILLIE. I'm never going to stop till I get you.

MINNIE. This isn't right!

WILLIE. Right—hell! I want you. I'll be good to you. I'll make you happy. I'm going to give you the whole world. I'm crazy about you, Minnie. [*Holding her as she sits and kissing her lips in a long kiss.* FRANCES *comes down the steps and stops in horrified amazement.*]

FRANCES. Are you at it *again?*

MINNIE. He didn't mean it.

WILLIE. Certainly I mean it. *I'm* free. *I've* got wings and space and flight and I'm going to fly, too.

MINNIE. Don't, Willie—don't. *Stop!*

FRANCES. What does this mean?

WILLIE. I'm expressing myself all right—and I'm going to keep right on.

[*They all talk at once.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

NICE PEOPLE

THE CAST

AS FIRST PRESENTED IN NEW YORK AT THE KLAW THEATER MARCH 3RD, 1921

HALLIE LIVINGSTON	TALLULAH BANKHEAD
EILEEN BAXTER-JONES	KATHARINE CORNELL
TREVOR LEEDS	EDWIN HENSLEY
THEODORA GLOUCESTER	FRANCINE LARRIMORE
OLIVER COMSTOCK	GUY MILHAM
SCOTTY WILBUR	HUGH HUNTLEY
MARGARET RAINSFORD	MERLE MADDEN
HUBERT GLOUCESTER	FREDERICK PERRY
BILLY WADE	ROBERT AMES
MR. HEYFER	DAVID M. MURRAY

ACT I

SCENE: *The Gloucester Apartment in Park Avenue, New York City.*

TIME: *Eleven-thirty—an evening in May.*

The walls of the room are hung in very old silk of a soft greenish gray in tone. At back is a fireplace set in a jog which comes about two feet into the room. To the left of this jog is a single door opening into hall. In the left wall are two long windows hung with velvet curtains which melt into the walls in color. At right are double doors standing open and showing a grand piano in the room beyond. Over the mantelpiece hangs a large picture of three nude figures of girls running, with cloud-like draperies which also have the tone of the walls. The furniture is upholstered in an old brocade of ashes of roses which makes a charming background for the delicate orchid tints of HALLIE'S *gown—the rose velvet of* EILEEN'S *and the white transparent tissue of* TEDDY'S.

EILEEN, HALLIE *and* TREVOR *are in the room, singing gaily and carelessly to the music which* OLIVER *is playing in the room beyond.*

EILEEN BAXTER-JONES—*about twenty-one, is dark and piquant, frankly impertinent and very wholesomely lovable. She is sitting on the low seat at center with her back to the audience and her legs crossed unconcernedly—smoking a cigarette.*

HALLIE LIVINGSTON—*perhaps twenty-three, beautiful*

in a brilliantly blonde way, half reclining on the couch, is sipping her Scotch with a slow and self-centered enjoyment, indicative of her general psychology. The girls are exquisite in their youth and freshness, finely bred animals of care, health and money—dressed with daring emphasis of the prevailing fashion, startling in their delicate nakedness and sensuous charm.

TREVOR LEEDS *is tall and amazingly thin. He goes in for a great deal of manner and rather an English accent. As the music stops he crosses to the sofa to look at Hallie critically and condescendingly.*] You look like an orchid, Hallie, absolutely.

HALLIE. You say it as though you'd made a great discovery. That's what I'm supposed to look like—darling.

EILEEN. You're slow getting that, Trevor. [*Calling.*] Did you say we were going some place to dance, Teddy?

TEDDY [*Calling back from room at right*]. Yes. Don't you want to?

EILEEN. *Crazy* about it.

TEDDY. I thought we'd wait just a few more minutes for Scotty.

TREVOR [*Filling his glass again*]. Well, why the devil doesn't he come? He's got a nerve.

HALLIE. But there's no other man in the world for Teddy. Of course, she'll make us wait for him.

TEDDY [*Coming in from the right with a glass in her hand*]. Have another one, Oliver.

OLIVER [*Following* TEDDY *in*]. Thanks.

TEDDY. Eileen?

EILEEN. No, thanks. I know when I've had enough.

OLIVER [*As he pours another drink for himself*]. You mean you *think* you do. You're never so enticing as when you have a nice little bun, Eileen.

[THEODORA *is twenty—slender and vibrating, pretty, intelligent and high keyed, alertly and intensely interested in herself and the art of extracting from life all which she considers her due. She has a very radiant charm and vivid responsiveness.*

There is about them all the carelessness and indifference of very intimate friendship and a keen alertness to each other's foibles and idiosyncrasies.]

TEDDY. What time is it, Trevor?

TREVOR [*Looking at his watch*]. Ten forty-seven, to be exact.

EILEEN. Time Scotty was turning up, I should say, if he is ever going to.

TEDDY. I'm not at all sure that he will. I know of nothing in life so certain as the uncertainty of Scotty Wilbur.

HALLIE. How you can allow him to be so rude to you, Teddy, is absolutely beyond my comprehension.

TEDDY. There are so many things beyond your comprehension Hallie, dearest. Scotty isn't rude to me in the least. On the contrary, he's perfect.

HALLIE. Not according to my ideas of taste and sensibilities. I call it horribly rude to phone you at the last minute he couldn't come to dinner.

EILEEN. Sweetly adding he forgot he was booked for some place else.

OLIVER. At least he might have had the decency to lie a little.

TEDDY. But it was adorable of him *not* to lie. How can he help it if he forgot? I think it was wonderful of him to go there when he wanted to be here. Rena Maxwell actually needed him. Rena is so intellectual her dinners are stupid. The repartee sounds like the encyclopædia. And there's nothing to drink there now—not a drop. She's taken Prohibition seriously. [*Finishing her drink.*]

EILEEN. She's taken it as an *excuse* you mean. She always was too stingy to give a fellow a real drink.

TEDDY. Rena believes in drinking only with thine eyes.

TREVOR. Yes—Rena's a fish. [*Singing a snatch of "Drink to me only with thine eyes"—off key on the last note. They all scream at him to stop.*]

HALLIE. It's so awfully middle class to make one's education as evident as she makes hers. Isn't it?

EILEEN. Is that why you conceal yours so carefully?

HALLIE. I was beautifully educated in Paris, of course.

TEDDY. But not in much of anything else.

HALLIE. Mother was clever enough to have me taught just enough to appreciate everything in the world—but not to go far enough to be—you know. They said I might have been a great musician, but that would have been too stupid.

[OLIVER *lights* TEDDY'S *cigarette.*]

TREVOR. Of course appreciation is our vocation—appreciation of other people's work. I could open

a shop and go in for interior decoration. Lord knows I know far more about it than most of the dubs who are in it. But it reduces it all to such a beastly commercial basis immediately.

EILEEN. I don't know—sometimes I think I'd like to be able to do some one thing awfully well. To dance, for instance, I'd like to dance on the stage.

HALLIE. Horrors!

EILEEN. I would, really.

TEDDY. Why don't you?

EILEEN. They wouldn't let me.

TEDDY [*Going to the fire*]. Piffle! Do it anyway. What are you afraid of? I think the most vulgar second rate thing in the world is to be afraid. Anything can be made chic and frightfully individual—if one just does, you know.

TREVOR. Of course, if one has the individuality to get away with it.

OLIVER. Ted, I think you come as near getting away with anything you want to do as anybody I know.

HALLIE. I do, too. If I did half the things you do, Ted, I'd be horribly talked about.

TEDDY. Well, of course, because you're always trying to hide things. Do everything right before everybody's eyes—and dare them to talk. [*They laugh. The phone rings.*] There's Scotty now. Take it Trevor. If he's downstairs tell him to come up and have a drink before we go.

TREVOR [*Taking the receiver and imitating* TEDDY'S *voice*]. Hello! Oh! [*Drawing away.*] You'd better come, Ted. He's yelling for you. Where the devil

are you Scotty? [*Speaking in the phone again.*]

HALLIE [*As* TEDDY *goes to the phone*]. Tell him to meet us some place. Why should we wait?

TEDDY [*Taking the receiver*]. Where are you? Well, hurry. Yes—we will if you're here in five minutes. Ten's the limit. Is it a very dry party? This isn't. Hurry, or there won't be anything left. [*Putting up the receiver.*]

EILEEN. Is he headed this way at last?

TEDDY. Well—let's go. You must be having a rotten time here. [*She throws her cigarette into the fire.*]

HALLIE. Oh, we don't mind waiting, but it's so killing to see *you* holding your breath till he gets here. Of course, everybody's chasing Scotty more or less. Ethel Montague certainly is at it hard. *She's* the one who says Scotty wants to marry you for your money, Ted. Silly of her to say that, isn't it?

TEDDY. I notice when you have anything particularly disagreeable to say to me, Hallie, you pretend somebody else said it.

EILEEN. Hallie, you're always nasty when you've had too long a drink.

TEDDY. Yes, but it's the only time she's honest. Give her another one, Oliver. What's biting you? Go on—get it out of your system.

HALLIE. Heavens—don't take it seriously. You must be used to that by this time. Any girl who has as much money as you have, Teddy, must expect somebody to say that every man who looks at her wants her money.

TEDDY. I don't know that I have so much more than you have, for instance.

HALLIE [*Getting up from the sofa a little unsteadily and going to Teddy*]. But you look as though you had, honey. You have so many cars and things, you know. Three of your own, isn't it? And your pearls are *marvelous*—simply *marvelous*. No wonder Scotty wants you. [*She walks slowly and a trifle insolently into the room at right, and sits at the piano. She plays softly. A pause*—TREVOR *goes after her.* OLIVER *goes to* TEDDY, *about to speak, but follows* TREVOR *out.*]

EILEEN [*Going to* TEDDY]. To put it delicately, Hallie is tight.

TEDDY [*Looking after* HALLIE]. Oh no—she isn't. What did she mean?

EILEEN. Yes, she is, too. She's getting entirely too fond of booze lately and it's disgusting—absolutely disgusting.

TEDDY. *What did she mean? Do* people say Scotty only wants to marry me for my money?

EILEEN. You know she's mad about him herself, and she's always been jealous of you. I like Hallie but she is a damn cat, and she can't help scratching *you.*

TEDDY. Scotty doesn't care anything more about money than anybody does. And he *does* care for me.

EILEEN. Of course. That's why Hallie is so vicious.

HALLIE [*Coming back into the room*]. Hasn't

Scotty come yet? If I don't dance soon I shall expire.

TEDDY. Come on, Hallie, be a sport. Pretend you like me—for the sake of the party.

HALLIE. I like your gown.

TEDDY. Can you dance in that one?

HALLIE. Of course. Just throw it over my arm. [*Throwing the sash train over her arm and going up to the fire.*]

TEDDY. Oh, I didn't mean that. The back—where's a man going to put his hand?

HALLIE. Where he always does, of course. What's the matter with my back? [*Turning her back to the girls.*]

TEDDY. Nothing at all. It's doing very well this evening—so far as I can see.

EILEEN. That's the most economical kind of costume going—because you *can* wash your back—but when a man puts his old wet hand on this velvet—I nearly die. It simply ruins it.

HALLIE. Did you see Rena Maxwell's gown last night? [*Throwing herself into the armchair near the fireplace.*]

EILEEN. I don't see why Rena doesn't stay at home altogether.

HALLIE. I don't either. Nobody dances with her. Scotty was stuck with her last night and nobody would cut in. He whistled and made signs till he was black in the face and had to go through the whole dance with her.

TEDDY. Of course, no man wants to dance with her if she will wear corsets.

EILEEN. Old Ironsides—they call her.

TEDDY. Rena doesn't go in for much personal contact when she dances.

HALLIE. No—this is the way she stands. [*Rising, and standing very straight in an old-fashioned way.*] You know if her head were only turned around the other way she wouldn't have such a bad figure. [*Slumping to show how* RENA *ought to stand.*] Oh, I'm dying to dance with Scotty. Don't you think he's the best dancer in town, Teddy?

TEDDY. He thinks *I* am—so of course I like dancing with him.

HALLIE. I adore the way he holds me. Just as though he were going to crush me.

TEDDY. But he never *does*.

HALLIE. Not while we're dancing. I adore a man who is absolutely mad about me and yet who controls himself in that perfectly marvelous way.

TEDDY. Oh, I don't know. I'm not so keen about so much self-control.

HALLIE. Oh, I am. I think it's much more subtle.

EILEEN. Well, I must say I like sort of a frank flash of pash—once in a while—so you know where you're at. Elemental stuff, you know.

TEDDY [*Giggling at Eileen*]. You like being in danger sometimes.

HALLIE. Oh, I hate horribly obvious emotion. It doesn't interest me in the least.

EILEEN. You're trying to make us think you're subtly and insidiously wicked, Hallie.

TEDDY. Like Trevor. Psychologically he's a devil —but *physiologically* he's as tame as your grandmother. Eileen, did Trevor ever kiss you?

EILEEN. Don't remember.

HALLIE. Well—*really!* I don't *tell.*

TEDDY. That's just it. There'd be nothing *to* tell if he ever did.

HALLIE. Your pearls *are* large—aren't they?

TEDDY. They're just the way I want them.

HALLIE. Someone was saying the other day they're just like Mrs. Allister's, and wondered if your father got them both at the same time.

TEDDY [*After a pause*]. I have to hand it to you, Hallie. You can say the rottenest things in the sweetest way of anybody I know.

TREVOR [*Coming back into the room*]. Hasn't Scotty come yet?

HALLIE. Oh no, we're still waiting. [*Going back into the other room to play again.*]

TEDDY. We'll only give him three minutes longer.

TREVOR [*Beginning to dance with* EILEEN]. You don't mind so long as you have me, do you, love?

EILEEN. I don't mind anything as long as I'm in your arms. We've just been saying how dangerous you are, Trevor.

TREVOR. I might fool you some of these days.

EILEEN [*Bending back as she flings herself against him*]. Well, why don't you? [*They dance out of the room.*]

OLIVER [*Coming back*]. Don't you want to go without Scotty?

TEDDY. Of course. [*She holds out her arms to him and they dance.*]

OLIVER. No, you don't. You care an awful lot—don't you? [*She shakes her head.*] Yes, you do.

He'll never love you as much as I do. I've always been crazy about you, Teddy. You did care a little, didn't you? Don't you any more?

TEDDY. Yes, I do. Of course I do. You're a dear.

OLIVER. Oh, I know—pal stuff. I don't want that.

TEDDY. But I'm awfully fond of you—really, dear, I am.

OLIVER. Then kiss me.

TEDDY. No.

OLIVER. Please.

TEDDY. No.

OLIVER. Not even a sisterly one? [TEDDY *kisses his cheek. He stops dancing and kisses her lips.*]

TEDDY. Don't, please. No, I don't like it. Go on. You do dance divinely, old man. You're the only man I can dance with.

OLIVER. Will you give the others the slip after awhile and go some place else to dance with me?

TEDDY. I'll—se-see.

OLIVER. Promise.

TEDDY. I'll——

SCOTTY. Hello! [SCOTTY WILBUR *dashes in from the hall, excited and smiling—with irresponsible and irresistible charm.*]

TEDDY. Hello, Scotty! [*She stops dancing quickly and goes to Scotty eagerly.*]

SCOTTY. Terribly sorry, Teddy. I beat it as soon as I could. Wasn't it the limit? Don't know how I ever did such a thing. But I knew you'd understand. You always do.

TEDDY [*Beaming at* SCOTTY]. We're going some

place to dance. Get them started, Oliver, will you?

Oliver. Hello, Scotty. [Oliver *looking not too graciously at* Scotty, *goes into the room at right.*]

Scotty. You're a peach not to care. [*She lets him take her in his arms and kiss her.*] You're the——

Teddy [*Drawing away*]. Careful!

Scotty. Who's here?

Teddy. Eileen and Hallie. Let's get off. Was the dinner awful?

Scotty. Not so bad. Only, of course, I wanted to be *here.*

Teddy. It really doesn't make the slightest difference to you where you are, Scotty, does it? So long as the food is good.

Scotty. It wouldn't if you were along.

Teddy. Every girl you know thinks you mean that.

Scotty. And you *know* I do.

Teddy. I know you *don't.* That's why we—That's why it's all right with us.

Scotty. It is all right, isn't it?

Teddy. Come on—let's dance. You're the only man I can dance with.

Scotty. I adore you. [*They dance—pressing their cheeks together.*]

[Margaret Rainsford *enters from the hall. She is extremely distinguished, a little tired, a little pale, with a critical intelligence in her face, which makes her a trifle cold, but a frank simplicity of manner which is very appealing. She is wearing a black evening gown—at once modish but conservative, with an air of exclusiveness which lifts it beyond mere smartness.*]

TEDDY [*As they stop dancing*]. Aunt Margaret, this is Scotty Wilbur. My aunt, Mrs. Rainsford.

SCOTTY [*Going to* MARGARET *as she extends her hand*]. How do you do?

MARGARET. How do you do? Are you Arthur Wilbur's son—the Philadelphia Wilburs?

SCOTTY. No. I'm afraid not. We aren't anything in particular—just New York.

[MARGARET *laughs agreeably and* SCOTTY *laughs with her.*]

MARGARET. You see, I've been away a long time and I keep trying to catch hold of threads I used to know. Rather foolish, I suppose.

SCOTTY. Rather hopeless, I expect. Threads break awfully fast—don't they—and awfully short.

MARGARET. They seem to. [*Smiling tolerantly as she crosses to sit on the sofa.*]

TEDDY. Aunt Margaret was my mother's sister, you know, Scotty.

SCOTTY. Oh, really?

MARGARET. Did you know my sister?

SCOTTY. No—no, I didn't. I—no—I didn't.

TEDDY. Oh no—I've only known Scotty long enough to still like him. How long is it, Scotty? Oh, Dad, may we take your car? [*As* HUBERT GLOUCESTER *enters from the hall.*] You aren't going to use it tonight, are you?

SCOTTY. I've got mine here.

TEDDY. But yours is open. We don't want that. May we, Dad?

HUBERT. Certainly.

TEDDY. You're an angel. Phone for yours and

mine both, will you? There's a dear. And tell them to hurry. Your man's awfully slow, Dad. I wouldn't have him.

HUBERT. I didn't engage him to keep up with you, you know. [*He goes to the phone good naturedly.*]

GLOUCESTER *is fifty, of medium height, slightly inclined to portliness. His hair, which grows with an attractive wave, is white, heightening the very young color and general brightness of his face. He has a tolerant air of well being and is entirely satisfied with life in general.*]

SCOTTY [*to* MARGARET]. Aren't you coming with us?

MARGARET. Do you need me? Haven't you a chaperon?

TEDDY. Heavens, Aunt Margaret! We're not babies.

MARGARET. You don't mean to say you're going without one?

TEDDY. Why, I haven't been any place with a chaperon for a million years.

MARGARET. You're twenty, I believe.

TEDDY. I believe I am—something like that.

MARGARET. You surely don't consider that old enough to go about alone?

TEDDY. We won't be alone. We'll all be together. Everybody does it. It would be too foolish to have—Why, I'd feel as if I had a nurse.

[*The four other young people come in from the room at right greeting* MR. GLOUCESTER *carelessly without stopping their conversation.*]

OLIVER. I'll bet you anything you like she stands

up better than any car going. [*Heard above the others as they all talk at once.*]

TREVOR. I don't agree with you. I'll put my car up against anything.

OLIVER. You're hipped on that little wagon of yours, Trevor.

SCOTTY. It hasn't got a look-in with a real car. [*Going to the table at R. to pour out a drink.*]

HALLIE [*Stopping by* SCOTTY *as she comes back into the room*]. Oh, hello, Scotty. Did you condescend to come, after all?

SCOTTY. I broke my neck to get here.

HALLIE. I wouldn't forgive you if I were Teddy. Don't ever break a date with me. [*Moving close to him as she lowers her voice.*]

SCOTTY. I never did—did I?

HALLIE. Do you want to come to dinner tomorrow night?

SCOTTY. Love to.

HALLIE. Nobody else—just me. Like it?

SCOTTY. Crazy about it. If I haven't anything on.

HALLIE. Break it. I want to talk to you. We haven't had a real talk for such a——

TEDDY [*Having watched* HALLIE *and* SCOTTIE]. Let's go. Did you get the cars, Dad?

HUBERT. They'll be here in a very few minutes. Won't you young men have something more before you go? In the dining-room. Help yourself.

THE MEN [*Indefinitely through the other voices*]. Thanks. [*They slowly move toward hall door, all talking at once.* MARGARET *sits on the couch watching them.* HUBERT *goes to stand before the fire.*]

TREVOR [*Holding* TEDDY *back as the others go into the hall.*] Will you dance with me first?

TEDDY. Of course. You're the only man I can dance with. Oh, Dad, let me have your key. I can't find mine.

HUBERT [*Slipping a key off the ring*]. That's about the third one I've given you this week, young lady. Mind you give that back.

TEDDY. Thanks a lot. Good night, Aunt Margaret. Good night, Dad. Oh, Lordy, I forgot. [*Coming back to her father.*] I haven't a cent and this is my party.

HUBERT. I don't think I can do much for you.

TEDDY [*Counting as her father unfolds some bills*]. Twenty—forty. Oh, come on, Dad, you must have some more. Try again. [*He takes out more bills.*] Forty—eighty. That all?

HUBERT. Absolutely.

TEDDY. For this relief much thanks. If anybody telephones—tell them I'll be home early—in the morning. Goodnight. [TEDDY *flutters out through the hall.* HUBERT *lights a cigarette.*]

MARGARET [*After a pause*]. The guests didn't even say goodnight. It isn't done, I suppose.

HUBERT [*With an amused chuckle*]. Nothing's done that's too much trouble—you can count on that.

MARGARET. You think bad manners are amusing then?

HUBERT. Not especially—no—just prevalent.

MARGARET. It's appalling—simply appalling.

HUBERT. What?

MARGARET. All of it—everything.

HUBERT. Oh, you take it too seriously entirely, Margaret.

MARGARET. You mean, you think it's all right—all of it.

HUBERT [*Smoking comfortably with his back to the fire*]. It's the way things *are*. The manners of yesterday have nothing to do with the case. This is today.

MARGARET. If my sister could see her daughter now! I only hope she can't.

HUBERT. Bosh! If Lucille had lived she would have come right along with the tide.

MARGARET. No!

HUBERT. Yes!

MARGARET. Never!

HUBERT. Yes! She was too much a woman of the world not to.

MARGARET. A woman of the world yes—but a gentlewoman.

HUBERT. See here, Margaret, do you mean you think I'm not keeping Teddy up to what Lucille would have made her?

MARGARET. Well, do you think you are?

HUBERT. Why—these are the nicest kind of young people. Smart families—every one of them.

MARGARET. That's just it. That's what makes it so horrible. If they were common little upstarts and parvenues it would be easy to understand. But nice people! What are their parents thinking of? Can't they see what it's going to do to the future generations?

HUBERT. There never was a generation that grew

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up that didn't think the next one coming on was going to the dogs. They're freer—yes—because they *are* younger. But, by Jove, I actually believe they are safer than the bottled up age I went through—when we had to sneak about all the deviltry we got into. They're perfectly open and above-board about it. You'll have to admit that. And they're going to work out their own salvation in their own way—and come out all right.

MARGARET. There's something far more serious in it than merely the difference between two generations.

HUBERT. Oh, you exaggerate. Frankly I think you're awfully priggish. If you measure everything from your own conservative ideas of good form, of course, these youngsters seem a little raw. But this is their day——

MARGARET. Oh—*their day!* I'm not talking about superficial fashions and manners. The vital things of character don't belong to anybody's day—they're eternal and fundamental and I see Lucille's daughter without them.

HUBERT [*After a slight pause of surprise*]. That's rather plain talk.

MARGARET. I mean to be plain. Why not? I know what I am feeling now—she would feel. I know that what I find in her house since I have come back would have——

HUBERT. And what have you found? I'm able to do more for Teddy than I did for Lucille. That's the only bad thing about it—that she isn't here to have it.

MARGARET. She would have hated it. She wouldn't

have let you give that child eighty dollars to throw away in an evening.

HUBERT. Eighty dollars! That won't get them more than a sandwich or two apiece.

MARGARET. She wouldn't have let her go about half naked and wearing pearls that no young girl should ever wear.

HUBERT. Nonsense! You're old-fashioned and entirely too damned—something. What in the name of heaven is the matter with Teddy? What's the matter with her? She's a charming girl and a great success and her friends are as nice as anybody in New York.

MARGARET. The emptiness—the soul-lessness of it all!

HUBERT. What?

MARGARET. I've been here three days and I haven't heard her, nor any of her friends, say a single word or express a thought about anything on earth but their clothes and their motors and themselves. They all talk alike, think alike, dress alike, sound alike. And the drinking! Your house is a bar. It pours out—at all hours.

HUBERT. That's Prohibition. It only amuses them to have it about when they can't get it other places.

MARGARET. Is that all you can see in it?

HUBERT. That's all there is in it.

MARGARET. And the smoking! Those delicate young girls are as dependent upon their cigarettes to quiet their nerves as any—Oh, it's too terrible.

HUBERT. I have rowed with Ted about the cigarettes. That is bad, I admit, but what are you going to do? It's not her fault, they all do it.

MARGARET. Who are these boys who are making love to her—running about with her alone? Are you willing for her to marry them?

HUBERT. I don't know that she wants to.

MARGARET. Do you never advise her?

HUBERT. I'm doing all I can to make her happy. She's a nice girl and she's perfectly capable of taking care of herself.

MARGARET. She isn't! She isn't! She's only a child. She's surrounded by everything that can hurt her and nothing that can help her. It's all chaos and waste and degeneracy. And my boy—lying out there in France! And this is all it was for! He went so gladly. He gave himself for something greater than himself—to save civilization. Oh, the farce of it! The hideous, horrible useless sacrifice! [*She leans back on the pillows—shaken with sobs.*]

HUBERT. Don't think I don't know how you feel. Of course you're cut up. But Margaret—if you'll allow me to say so—you're allowing your own personal sorrow to color everything. You're letting it make you bitter and—well, I don't see what all this has to do with Teddy.

MARGARET. It has everything to do with her. She's the most poignant part of it all. I came back so eager to see her because she meant part of Lucille. I was so thankful she was alive even if John—— [*Her voice breaks.*]

HUBERT. Margaret! [*Putting a hand on her shoulder kindly.*]

MARGARET. I said, I'll try to put my own grief

aside. I'll try to mean something to her—something of what she's lost in her mother. I could scarcely wait to get here. She was going to be so wonderful—and—

HUBERT. Well?

MARGARET. And instead of that——

HUBERT. Well—what?

MARGARET. Oh, my God, Hubert, she's been killed and thrown away just as absolutely as John was. She's the very essence of this thing that's in the air. Why have you let it kill Theodora?

HUBERT [*Moving away and strongly resisting her argument*]. I don't admit what you say—I don't admit that she's doing or having anything that isn't the custom of any nice girl with——

[TEDDY *throws the hall door open and comes in* quickly followed by SCOTT. *She hesitates a moment, a little surprised at finding* MARGARET *and her father still in the room. There is a pause.*]

TEDDY. Are you two still up?

HUBERT. I thought you'd gone to dance.

TEDDY. We changed our minds. We're going some place else.

HUBERT. Where?

TEDDY. Why—some place—further up—out. Everything's so frightfully crowded, you know, it's really no fun.

HUBERT. What place? Where are you going?

TEDDY. A place Oliver knows. Where is it, Scotty?

SCOTTY. I'm not dead sure. I've been there. Awfully nice. But Oliver'll have to direct us. We're all going together, you know.

HUBERT [*Looking at his watch*]. Everything closes at one. You wouldn't more than have time to get there till you would have to come back.

TEDDY. It will be fun to drive up anyway. I'm going to get a heavier coat. That's what I came back for.

HUBERT. I don't want you to go.

TEDDY. What?

HUBERT. I don't want you to go.

TEDDY [*In amazed amusement*]. Why Dad! What do you mean?

HUBERT. Just that. It's too late. You've done enough tonight.

TEDDY. You're frightfully amusing. Why this sudden sternness? Of course, I'm going. The others are waiting.

HUBERT. You can't go.

TEDDY. Why, Father——

HUBERT. Say goodnight to Mr. Wilbur.

TEDDY. Really, you're funny. I'll do nothing of the kind. I'm not going to disappoint those people. [*She starts to the door.*]

HUBERT. You'll not go.

TEDDY. You can't speak that way to me. I'm not a baby.

HUBERT. I'm sorry but——

TEDDY. I'm sorry, too—but I'm going.

HUBERT. You're not.

TEDDY. You're extremely disagreeable. You can't make me break a positive engagement and treat people——

HUBERT. We won't say anything more about that. You're not going. That will do.

TEDDY. [*After a pause she goes quickly to the table, tears a small piece of paper, writes on it, folds it*]. Scotty, there's the telephone number I promised you. Goodnight, Scott. Please apologize to the others for me and tell them how extremely sorry I am that such a ridiculously embarrassing thing has happened. Goodnight.

SCOTTY [*A little embarrassed, but still smiling*]. Goodnight. Goodnight. Goodnight. [*He goes out.*]

TEDDY. What on earth do you mean, Dad? How dare you treat me like that? [*She faces her father with a blaze of anger.*]

HUBERT. You shouldn't have made it necessary. If you don't know by this time that a young girl can't be motoring out to dance halls at this time of night, it's high time you did.

TEDDY. You've never questioned my good taste before about where I go and what I do. Why this sudden——

HUBERT. I hope you've never done anything before that needed questioning.

TEDDY. Do you think we've never done this before? We do it all the time and then we come downtown and have breakfast at Childs—and it's a lot of fun and I intend to keep on doing it—or anything else I want to do. I suppose I can thank you, Aunt Margaret, for this sudden interest in my affairs.

HUBERT. Teddy!

TEDDY. I've never been so humiliated in my life.

HUBERT. Teddy!

TEDDY. Father's always had the decency and common sense to believe that whatever I did was all right. This is absolutely the first time he's ever behaved in this absurd manner and I know you put it into his head.

HUBERT. Be careful.

TEDDY. Well—isn't it true?

HUBERT. I—I simply didn't know you were doing such things. It isn't necessary. There are plenty of other things to do for amusement.

TEDDY. I think I must be the judge of what I find amusing. I like this.

HUBERT. Then your judgment is not to be trusted.

TEDDY. Trusted? I don't know that yours is, father. You do a great many things that I don't like. Mrs. Allister, for instance, is far from what I call good taste and yet you seem to find her extremely amusing.

HUBERT [*Helplessly and much embarrassed*]. A—go to bed.

TEDDY. I don't want to go to bed.

HUBERT. Well, you ought to want to.

TEDDY. Are you going to decide when I go to bed, too? You'd better put me on a leash, father. It would be much easier for you.

HUBERT. You don't treat me with any respect.

TEDDY. I didn't know you wanted me to.

HUBERT. You—— [*Trying to be dignified and stern, he goes helplessly out of the room through the hall door.* TEDDY *turns to* MARGARET. *A pause as they look steadily at each other.*]

MARGARET [*Rising*]. Oh, my dear girl—understand this. It all happened because I'm interested in you—because I love you very much.

TEDDY. Please don't let your interest make father lose his head and behave like this again.

MARGARET. Don't, Theodora! You're so young, dear. I'm saying things your mother would say to you if she were here.

TEDDY. Just what's wrong with what we were going to do tonight? Just what's wrong, pray? Don't you think we're to be trusted alone? Don't you think we're decent enough to behave without being watched every minute?

MARGARET. I think you're young and impetuous and human and that you're getting your pleasure in the very same way that the fastest, commonest sort of people get it, and it all leads to a looseness and laxness that can't possibly have anything but harm in it.

TEDDY. I don't agree with you at all. I believe in freedom. I think it makes us strong and independent. Nothing is so dangerous as narrow, evil-mindedness—and nothing is as safe as frankness

MARGARET. That's the song the world is riding to the devil on just now. That's what we're fooling ourselves with.

TEDDY. If you're going to judge me and what I do by yourself and what you think is right, I dare say everything I do and say and think is wrong. But I don't— Oh, we aren't getting anywhere. Let's drop it and say good night. [*She starts toward the door.*]

MARGARET. Theodora—wait, please. You surely

know it's very hard to say these disagreeable things to you.

TEDDY. Then why on earth do you do it?

MARGARET. Because you're in danger—because I want to help you.

TEDDY. What a joke!

MARGARET. The very dress you have on is indecent. Positively indecent. These boys—the promiscuous love making I see going on here all the time—the familiarity—the freedom as you call it—the kissing—it's all wrong—as wrong as it can be.

TEDDY. Kissing? How silly! There are kisses and kisses. Kissing doesn't mean any more now than shaking hands did—when you were a girl.

MARGARET. Don't you know that you're wasting the most precious years of your life without doing one ounce of good to anybody—or thinking one thought of anything but yourself and your body? Don't you know you are spending too much money—wasting it here and there, when there never was a time that greater good could be done with it? Don't you know you're being horribly criticized for it? [*She comes close to* TEDDY.]

TEDDY. You've said quite enough, Aunt Margaret.

MARGARET. I've hurt you and I only want to help you.

TEDDY. But I don't consider I need your help. Goodnight.

MARGARET. My dear little girl—try to see that I'm only—Won't you kiss me goodnight?

[TEDDY *doesn't move.* MARGARET *goes to the hall*

door.] You will see when you aren't angry. Good-night, dear. [*She goes out.*]

[*Slow tears come into* TEDDY's *eyes. She fights them away—and goes to the telephone, taking the receiver.*]

TEDDY. Hello. Is there a young man down there? Ask him to come to the telephone. Hello—Scotty—I'll change my dress and be down in fifteen minutes. Telephone the others and ask them to wait for us. I know a peach of a place to go for breakfast. What? Yes, of course he nearly choked. Stuff! I hope you don't think I'm afraid of Dad. He was only showing off before Aunt Margaret—trying to make a noise like a father. [*She puts up the receiver.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT II

SCENE I

TIME: *Seven o'clock the following evening.*

PLACE: *The Gloucester cottage in Westchester.*

The room shows that the house is old and simple and that it has been done over with modern taste and comfort.

The upper left half of the room is an alcove with two windows in it and a slanting ceiling. At center of the left side of the room is a fireplace and simple wooden mantel. At lower left is a jog and in this a single door leading into the dining room.

At right are three small windows placed close together and in the middle of the right half of back wall is the outside door leading into the garden.

Before the windows at right is a long narrow wooden seat with spindle back and arms and an upholstered cushion.

In front of this seat is a medium sized round table—with small quaint chairs about it.

Before the fireplace is a large wing-chair and in the alcove a smaller table.

The furniture and chintz curtains have an air of having been picked up by someone who loved them, but of being now neglected and long out of use.

Some of the pieces are covered with dust-covers of muslin.

At curtain the room is empty and only a faint light comes in from the windows:

After a moment TEDDY *and* SCOTT *appear at the window in the alcove.* SCOTT *tries to raise the window.*

SCOTTY. The window's locked. What do I do now?

TEDDY. Break it. Break the pane near the catch. Let me do it. It's one of those little funny ones. Take my slipper off. [SCOTTY *takes one of* TEDDY'S *slippers off and she breaks a pane of glass with it, puts her hand in, slips the catch and pushes the window up.*] Pretty spiffy! Now give me a boost. [SCOTTY *helps her, and she climbs in at the window.*] Come on. Don't stand on ceremony. [SCOTTY *climbs in.* TEDDY *hops down stage on one foot and puts her slipper on.*]

SCOTTY. Oh, is it all done up in moth balls? [*Seeing the coverings on the furniture as he goes towards the other windows.*]

TEDDY. Dad and I only use it for week-ends once in a while. It's really a peachy little place. It was mother's. She loved it. Take the covers off the table and those two chairs. Now where's the key? I know. Here! [*Getting the key which hangs at side of door and unlocking the door.*] Pull! It sticks! [*They get the door open.*] Oh, isn't it pretty out there! It's going to be divine going home. Those little cross roads are too heavenly in the moonlight.

SCOTTY. This is immense!

TEDDY. Get the coffee. [*He gets the Thermos bottle and packages of sandwiches from the doorstep outside.* SCOTTY *whistles.* TEDDY *sings.*] See if you can start a fire.

SCOTTY [*Going to the fireplace*]. There's just a speck of stuff here.

TEDDY. The wood house is straight through the dining room beyond the kitchen. [*Pointing to door at left.*] Keep going till you bump your head against a funny little door.

SCOTTY [*As he goes out*]. If I fall dead come and get me.

TEDDY [*Calling after him as she unscrews the two cups which are on the top of the Thermos bottle—takes out the cork, opens the sandwiches—looks at her watch*]. It's just a little after seven now. The others are all dressing for dinner and wondering where we are and cussing us out for giving them the slip. And father is pacing up and down foaming at the mouth. Oh fine! [*As* SCOTTY *comes back with an arm full of wood.*] Put some on.

SCOTTY [*Beginning to build the fire*]. Will he raise the devil?

TEDDY. I hope so. It will do him good. This will show him the stern parent idea is extinct.

SCOTTY. He's pretty fine you know.

TEDDY. Dad's really a peach. I was awfully disappointed in him—kicking up such a row last night. I thought I had him too well trained for that. Shut the door. It's not exactly balmy in here, is it?

SCOTTY [*Closing the door*]. It's always balmy for me where you are, sweetie.

TEDDY. It's always tropical for me where you are, precious.

SCOTTY. Angel! [*He starts to kiss her.*]

TEDDY. Let's eat. Um! I never was so hungry in my life. [*They sit in the two chairs above the table at right.*] Oh, the coffee's boiling hot.

SCOTTY [*As he takes a sip*]. Gosh!

TEDDY. What?

SCOTTY. I forgot. I had a date with Hallie tonight.

TEDDY. Oh, I thought it was something important.

SCOTTY. Promised I'd go to dinner with her.

TEDDY. Well, you've escaped that. She won't do a thing to me for keeping you out all night. I'll bet she's telephoned Dad every fifteen minutes all day just to keep him stirred up. By *this* time I bet she's got him thinking we've been out *two* nights.

SCOTTY. You can't expect him to be exactly calm about it, you know, old girl. This is going some even for you.

TEDDY. Well, I want to make an impression—so he won't misbehave again. We can get back by ten. That will be a very *chaste* hour to stroll in and say we had a *sweet* quiet day in the country.

SCOTTY. Having left home last night about midnight——

TEDDY. Danced all night at three different joints——

SCOTTY. Four!

TEDDY. Had breakfast at a very queer roadhouse and then with a few deft lies gave the others the slip—

SCOTTY. Motored with me all day—and here we are.

TEDDY. Alone at last with night coming on apace. Don't you love it? I'm crazy about it.

SCOTTY. You're a peach. I adore you. See here, honey, there couldn't be a better time and place to tell me you'll marry me. [*Lighting their cigarettes.*]

TEDDY. Why do you want to marry me, Scott?

SCOTTY. I like that!

TEDDY. I mean—how do you know you do?

SCOTTY. How do I know anything?

TEDDY. But you've been in love with so many girls.

SCOTTY. But I never wanted to marry so many.

TEDDY. Am I the *great* passion of your life?

SCOTTY. You are! [*He starts to kiss her. The door blows open.*]

TEDDY. Oh, shut it tight! Heavens, is it raining?

SCOTTY. Don't think so. [*He closes the door with a bang.*] Are you cold, dear?

TEDDY. N-o, but I'm not exactly roasting.

SCOTTY. This will make you all right. [*Taking a flask from his pocket.*]

TEDDY. Goodness, is there any left?

SCOTTY [*Pouring some whiskey into the cups.*] I got it refilled at the last place. [*Giving her a cup.*]

TEDDY. Yes, *you* got refilled in the last place. [*Taking a sip.*] Oh, I hate it this way—without water.

SCOTTY. But there isn't any water—so don't be so fastidious. Drink it all dearest. You must. I wouldn't have you take cold for anything. Come and sit over here by the fire. [*Drawing the armchair out.*]

TEDDY. We must go in a minute. Aren't there any candles there to light?

SCOTTY. What's the use? I love it this way. [*She sits in the chair. He sits on the arm.*] I adore being really alone with you, sweetheart—way off like this. It makes me feel you really do care. Tell me how much. [*Putting his head against hers.*]

TEDDY. I don't know.

SCOTTY. Ah, don't say that, Ted. You make me miserable. Tell me this—has there ever been anybody you cared for *more?* Be honest.

TEDDY. No. Unless, perhaps—Oh no there really wasn't.

SCOTTY. Was Oliver *the* one? [*Drinking from the flask.*]

TEDDY. Dear old Ollie! I always *will* love him.

SCOTTY. *Don't!*

TEDDY. Not *this* way—silly. He's just a perfectly adorable old darling.

SCOTTY. Yes, with money to burn and I haven't a cent. That's why I'm jealous of him.

TEDDY. Don't be stupid! Dad's got enough. I'm glad you *haven't* any, Scott, so if I do marry you I'll know it's for yourself alone, see?

SCOTTY. Don't say *if*. You aren't just flirting with me, are you, Ted?

TEDDY. Of course not. I'm making up my mind.

SCOTTY. Well, how's your mind getting along? Where are we now?

TEDDY. I'll tell you *one* thing—pos-i-tively—I feel very much more as if I *might* marry you than I ever did anybody else.

SCOTTY. That's wonderful! [*He takes another drink.*]

TEDDY. I thought you'd appreciate it. I believe, Scotty, I like you because you haven't any character.

SCOTTY. Thanks.

TEDDY. You're so nice and *drifty.* See that queer light in the fire. Pretty! Isn't it weird and sweet—shut up here with the whole world outside? I *want* to believe in love. It *ought* to be the most wonderful thing in the world.

SCOTTY. It is. [*Putting his arm about her and speaking with his lips on her cheek.*] I'm mad about you. I don't give a rap about anybody else in the world.

TEDDY. Not even Hallie?

SCOTTY. Hallie—stuff!

TEDDY. She's mad about *you.*

SCOTTY. *Are* you jealous of Hallie, sweetheart?

TEDDY. Not a bit. I think she's a pill!

SCOTTY. Kiss me! [*He snatches her in his arms and kisses her lips.*] Dearest! Take your hat off! [*There is a faint flash of lightning.*]

TEDDY. No!

SCOTTY. Please! I want to see your wonderful hair. Let me! [*He takes her hat off and kisses her hair, then her lips.*] I adore you, Ted, have you ever kissed anybody that way before? [*She doesn't answer.*] You *have.* Who?

TEDDY. I can't always help—*how* people kiss me!

SCOTTY. But have *you* kissed—too?

TEDDY. Um—I don't remember!

SCOTTY. Kiss me, with all your heart now, dear. Please. [*She leans slowly towards him and kisses his lips. He stands up and lifts her in his arms.*]

TEDDY. Do you know what would make us know that we loved each other?

SCOTTY. What?

[*A sudden downpour of rain begins with thunder, lightning and wind.*]

TEDDY. If we hadn't any money at all, just ourselves, then we'd know.

SCOTTY [*Holding her*]. Couldn't be done.

TEDDY. But what if I *hadn't* any money?

SCOTTY. But you *have*. Thank God, there's nothing like that with us.

TEDDY [*Looking at him keenly and drawing away from him a little, realizing that he has had too much to drink*]. Scott—does it really mean an awful lot to you—my money?

[*The storm grows more violent.*]

SCOTTY. Kiss me. What does anything else mean?

TEDDY [*Holding him off*]. What if you knew this minute I didn't have a cent? What would you do?

SCOTTY. Don't say disagreeable things. We're happy.

TEDDY. Would you want to marry me then?

SCOTTY. What's the use talking moonshine? We know each other too well. I couldn't marry anybody on earth without money.

TEDDY. *Is* money the most important thing in the world to you, Scott?

SCOTTY. Kiss me.

TEDDY. No! No! No! You don't love me. This is horrible. I want to go. [*Getting away from him.*] Listen. It *is* raining. [*A slow flash of lightning lights the room and the heavy rain and wind are heard.*]

SCOTTY. Nothing but a little Spring shower. We have to wait till it's over. Come and sit down again.

TEDDY. No, I don't want to. [*Moving away from him.*]

SCOTTY. Why not? I want to tell you how much I love you. Kiss me!

TEDDY. No!

SCOTTY. You've got to.

TEDDY. I won't. Let me go. Scott—*don't.*

[*He draws her onto the seat at R. She gets to her feet and pushes him so he falls on the bench.*]

SCOTTY. Oh, this feels good! Come here, dearie. Where are you? Come here and sit beside me. Look! See? Here's a nice little place for you right here.

[*Another flash shows* TEDDY *standing in the middle of the room, horror stricken*—SCOTTY *lying full length on the bench.*]

TEDDY. Scotty, get up. We must go! I *hate* this! You're not going to sleep. [*There is a peal of thunder. The storm increases. She goes to the fireplace.*] Oh, aren't there any candles here? [*She looks on the table in the alcove, and closes the window. After a moment a man opens the outer door. A flash of lightning shows him to be young and strong. He wears a rain-soaked top coat and cap and carries an electric lantern.*]

BILLY. Oh, I hope I didn't frighten you. [*Coming*

in and closing the door.] I guess you didn't hear me knock so I thought I'd take a chance and walk in.

TEDDY. Where did you come from? [*They shout above the noise of the storm.*]

BILLY. Up in the country further. I'm trying to get back to town. Never dreamed this storm was coming. She's a bird. Regular cloud burst. [*Lifting his lantern to see* TEDDY *better.*]

TEDDY. How long is it going to last?

BILLY. Don't know. Looks like an all nighter. These country roads are going to be in a sweet mess for a car. I skidded at the top of this hill out there till I thought I was going to glory. [*Another flash of lightning.*] Awful—isn't it? [*He turns his flashlight on* SCOTTY *and then back on* TEDDY.]

TEDDY [*Embarrassed as* BILLY *sees* SCOTT]. Yes—we—just came in for a few minutes ourselves and got caught—got caught in the *rain*—I mean. This is my house.

BILLY. Oh, I see. You're not living here?

TEDDY. I've got to get to New York. I've *got* to. Do you think my car can make it?

BILLY. I'm afraid nothing could do it in this. It's terrific—absolutely terrific. I'm sorry. It's a shame. I wish I could get you back. Can't I make that fire a little better for you? [*He puts his lantern on the mantel shelf and builds up the fire. The lantern and the fire throw a circle of light over them.*] You're lucky you made this house. At least it's better than lying in the ditch. [*He glances at* SCOTTY.]

TEDDY. I'm going on the minute it stops a little.

BILLY. She's not going to do that in a hurry. Gee, I'm pretty well soaked. Do you mind if I try to dry out a little?

TEDDY. If you can get anything dry tonight, you're welcome. [*She goes to the armchair. Billy takes off his top coat and puts it over a chair in the alcove.*]

BILLY. Thanks. It was a great piece of luck for me that you were here, I can tell you. [SCOTTY *groans in his sleep.* BILLY *looks inquisitively at him.*]

TEDDY. He doesn't feel very well.

BILLY. Is he ill? Could I do anything?

TEDDY. No—no. He's only dead for sleep. We've been motoring all day.

BILLY. I know. It gets you that way. [*A pause.*] Are you warm enough?

TEDDY. Oh yes—yes. It's all very delightful.

BILLY. It is for me. I must say this is the last thing I ever expected to happen.

TEDDY. I can't say I exactly planned and schemed for the situation myself.

BILLY. Do you mind my pipe?

TEDDY. Not if you give me one, too.

BILLY. I'm afraid Luckies are the best I can offer you. [*He begins to look at her with keen amusement and interest.*]

TEDDY. They're all right—if you just have enough of them. [*He lights her cigarette. There is another crash of thunder.*] Oh, why did this have to happen!

BILLY. The storm? [*He stands with his back to the fire.*]

TEDDY. It's put everything on the blink for me.

BILLY. I s'pose there never was a storm that didn't

spill the beans for somebody. But nothing ever seems half as bad in the morning.

TEDDY. This is once when everything's going to seem much worse in the morning. [*Sitting in the armchair.*]

BILLY. But you can make yourself pretty comfortable here for the night.

TEDDY. Oh, yes. I never was more comfortable in my life. Well, it's a delightful evening for a long chat by the fire. I must say I'm glad *you* dropped in. The other member of the party doesn't seem to be adding much to the gayety of nations.

BILLY. I'm glad to be a better talker than the other fellow for once.

TEDDY. It certainly is the chance of your life to sparkle. [BILLY *laughs.*] Go on—I was never so much in need of entertainment.

BILLY. Well, here's a bright gem. Do you dwell in New York?

TEDDY. Yes. Don't you?

BILLY. Y—e—s. I s'pose I do.

TEDDY. Don't you know whether you do or not?

BILLY. I hardly know whether I'm on earth or not.

TEDDY. What?

BILLY. When you hit the great city for the first time you don't know whether you're living in it or just having a pipe dream.

TEDDY. The first time in your whole life?

BILLY. Yep!

TEDDY. You don't look it.

BILLY. I s'pose you think I ought to have a ring in my nose.

TEDDY. Go on—sparkle some more.

BILLY. I'm afraid I'm running down.

TEDDY. Oh, don't. If you'll choose a topic of conversation, I'll do my best to keep up.

BILLY. I know a good one.

TEDDY. All right. Fire away.

BILLY. *You.* Who are you? What are you? What do you do with yourself—and what do you like best?

TEDDY. I said a conversation, not a catechism.

BILLY. That's the best I can do.

TEDDY. Well—who am I? Anonymous. What am I? Just an ordinary girl. What do I do? Amuse myself as much as possible. A——

BILLY. What do you like best?

TEDDY. To have my own way about everything in the world. Now you. You must be the "dook" in disguise at least.

BILLY. No—nothing so dressy. I'm an everyday guy—not so long out of the army—who fell into an awfully soft snap in New York.

TEDDY. What sort of a snap?

BILLY. A job somebody got for me through pull—with so much salary to it, it makes me dizzy.

TEDDY. Rather a spiffy dizziness, I should say.

BILLY. Yes, it is. I've been pretty lucky. I've fallen in with some awfully nice people and I don't mind telling you I don't know whether I'm coming or going.

TEDDY. I advise you to keep going.

BILLY. You either have to do that or get out.

If you stop in the middle, you drown. [SCOTTY *groans. They both look at him.*]

TEDDY. No—I don't think he's going to contradict you. Go on. Oh, yes—how do you like New York? Was it all as wonderful as you thought it would be?

BILLY. Much more wonderful and much more rotten.

TEDDY. What do you like best about it?

BILLY. The excitement, I s'pose.

TEDDY. What do you hate most?

BILLY. Oh, it would take a week to tell that.

TEDDY. Well, I think we'll be here a week.

BILLY. I hope so. [*Bowing low to her.*]

TEDDY. You say you've met some awfully nice people.

BILLY. I'm just coming from a house party now —on up further.

TEDDY. Any attractive girls there?

BILLY. Oh yes. One beauty, one stunner and one peach.

TEDDY. I s'pose you gobbled up the peach.

BILLY. No—the bloom on her cheek kept me guessing.

TEDDY. That's the cleverest thing a cheek can do.

BILLY. Oh, I don't know.

TEDDY. There's nothing so dull as being *sure.* Don't you like something left to the imagination?

BILLY. I *do.* But Lordie! There's precious little a girl leaves to the imagination now.

TEDDY. That sounds as though you'd been shocked.

BILLY. Shocked? I've been stunned. I knew the pace was pretty swift but—Wow!

TEDDY. Can't you keep up with it?

BILLY. I'm coming right along. But it knocks the wind out of me sometimes.

TEDDY. If you don't like it—why don't you get out?

BILLY. Oh, I don't want to go back to the same old thing. I was born on a farm so big you could lose one of these dinky little fellows around here in the fence corners. I wanted to be in New York and see life, and it's got me all right. I'm doing just what everybody else is.

TEDDY. You'll get over your provincial ideas. Freedom and frankness and beauty are so easily misunderstood by the outsider.

BILLY. I'm allowing for all I don't understand, but there's one thing I'm dead sure of.

TEDDY. What?

BILLY. They're making a circus out of some things. The casual way they get engaged and unengaged—for instance—makes my hair stand on end. What do they think it is—anyway? A game of tag?

TEDDY. Well—why not? What else can it be?

BILLY. The chasing's fun enough, but why get caught till you're sure you want to stay caught forever—till the whole game's over?

TEDDY. How can anybody be sure of that?

BILLY. They could be a darn sight more sure if they went at it as if it were a little something more than a try-out. What on earth do they think being married means?

TEDDY. And what on earth do you think it means?

BILLY. Oh—just the most important thing in the world—where everything starts, and where great things come from—if it's right—and where the worst things come from if it's wrong. What do you think it all means?

TEDDY. Nobody ever finds what he wants, anyway. And I think it's better to keep our dreams shut up tight and never let 'em out—so we won't be disappointed. [*She speaks with great wistfulness and honesty for the first time.*]

BILLY. I don't. I think it's better to let 'em out and make 'em come through.

TEDDY. Can't be done.

BILLY. Oh, yes it can.

TEDDY. How?

BILLY. By wishing and wishing—and never taking anything but the best wish.

TEDDY. I—I wish——

BILLY. What? [*There is a long flash of lightning.*]

TEDDY [*Rising*]. Nothing. I wish the storm would stop.

BILLY. I wish I could stop it for you. Let's see how it looks. [*Opening the door and shutting it quickly.*] It's getting worse. You might as well try to swim across the ocean as get to town in this.

TEDDY. Well, I can't help it—and that's all there is to it. [*Pause.*] You must wonder why I'm here. It isn't very easy to explain.

BILLY. Don't try. Why should you?

TEDDY. I came out—because somebody told me not

to. And you see, I'm having the time of my life.

BILLY. Well—a—a—a——

TEDDY. Exactly. Nobody will ever *quite* understand, but I hope *you* do.

BILLY. I understand it's tough luck and I wish to heaven I could get you back—but it can't be done. This is your house. You go up stairs and make yourself as comfortable as you can. It's the best thing to do—for a fact. I'll sit here—in this chair by the fire—and everything'll be all right. You'll have to be game. And you *will* be.

TEDDY. I'm game all right.

BILLY. That's right. You take the light. [*They go to the little door at left.*] I'll get you back in town in the morning—at daylight.

TEDDY. Oh no—please—please don't wait. I don't want you to—no, please. I'll get back all right. I'd rather you'd go before. I'd rather you'd be gone when I come down in the morning. It would be easier.

BILLY. Then I'll never see you again. But I'll never forget you. My name's Wade—Billy Wade. Do you want to tell me yours?

TEDDY. I'd rather not.

BILLY. And don't be afraid of anything tonight —will you?

TEDDY. Of course not—with you here. You've helped me through an awfully hard place—and you're splendid to understand.

BILLY. Why shouldn't I understand? You were held up by the storm and so was I. Why should I misunderstand you any more than you did me? You

didn't seem to think I was a highway robber or anything when I banged through that door.

TEDDY. Perhaps you are. Goodnight.

BILLY. Goodbye.

TEDDY. Goodbye. A—goodbye.

[*Exits.* BILLY *watches her off, closes the door, puts some wood on the fire, takes a blanket with which the table in the alcove is covered, starts to sit and wrap himself in it, remembers* SCOTTY*—goes to him and puts* SCOTTY'S *coat over him, goes back to the armchair, wraps himself in the blanket and prepares to sleep for the night. The storm rages all through this scene. The curtain is lowered to denote the passing of the night.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE II

Daylight comes in at the windows. Both boys are still asleep. After a moment Billy *rouses himself—surprised to find the blanket entirely across his chest. Standing up he shakes his stiff legs, smooths his hair, and after listening at the door left, goes over to look at* Scotty. *After a long look of curiosity, amusement and disgust he gets his hat and coat, throws the outer door open letting in a bright stream of light—and listening again, goes reluctantly out. The morning is fresh, the sun gradually comes in.*

After a moment Mr. Heyfer *passes the windows at back, comes to the door and seeing it is open enters quickly and pugnaciously.* Mr. Heyfer *is seventy, the typical product of a long life of hard work and nothing but work. Looking about he discovers* Scotty.

Heyfer [*Shouting at* Scotty]. Hey there, what you doin' in this house? Hey! Who are ye? [Going to Scotty *and shaking him.*]

Scotty [*Very sleepy*]. What? What's the matter? What? [*Half seeing* Heyfer.]

Heyfer. I say, what you doin' on this property? How'd you get in? There's a heavy fine fer trespassin'. Don't ye know that?

SCOTTY [*Getting up*]. Who are you?

HEYFER. None of yer business who I am. Git out o' this house.

SCOTTY. I will not.

HEYFER. Well, I guess ye will. I got stric' orders not to let nobody in—never—fer nothin'.

SCOTTY. Hold on till you know what you're talking about.

HEYFER. Don't give me no back talk or I'll—[TEDDY *comes in from the left, carrying her hat and coat.*] Who a'r ye?

TEDDY. Who are *you?*

HEYFER. This is private property.

TEDDY. Oh, you're old Mr. Heyfer.

HEYFER. Lord—air you Miss Gloucester? Where in the name o' goshum did you come from this time o' day? [*Slowly taking off his hat.*]

TEDDY. We were driving by last night and got caught in the storm and came in here.

HEYFER. You don't say. Is he yer husband? [*Looking at* SCOTTY.]

TEDDY. He is not.

SCOTTY. Lucky we got here, wasn't it?

HEYFER. Was ye here all night?

TEDDY. We were.

HEYFER. Both of ye?

SCOTTY. Certainly we were. What did you expect us to do, stay out in the rain all night?

HEYFER [*Staring in open-mouthed amazement from one to the other*]. I'd' know but what that might have been better.

SCOTTY. I'm afraid I don't agree with your point

of view. Quite a shower, wasn't it? But a very delightful morning, isn't it? [*Swaggering up to the open door.*]

HEYFER. How'd ye git in?

TEDDY. We busted in. Mend things, will you, please, and shut them up again? We're going on now. [*Putting on her hat.*]

HEYFER. It certainly is peculiar actions. Does your pa know you're out here?

TEDDY. No, and I don't see anything peculiar about coming into my own house.

HEYFER. Well, that's as may be. I'd' know as I jest quite understand. [*He goes out dubiously.*]

SCOTTY [*Going to* TEDDY]. I'm too horribly sorry. I wouldn't have had this happen for anything.

TEDDY. That's all right. It's not your fault.

SCOTTY. Don't mind it, dear. What difference can it make after all?

TEDDY [*Starting to put on her coat*]. None, *whatsoever*. Let's get home as fast as we can.

SCOTTY. But, Ted, it's going to be all right. You don't blame me, do you? [*Going to her and taking her coat.*]

TEDDY. Not the least little bit.

SCOTTY. It might have happened to anybody. Lots of people are caught in storms.

TEDDY. We certainly were *caught*.

SCOTTY. I'll do anything on earth to make it right.

TEDDY. There isn't anything you can do, to change it one way or the other. Get your coat and let's go.

MARGARET [*Calling from outside*]. Theodora!

TEDDY. Aunt Margaret!

MARGARET. Theodora—are you there? [MARGARET *rushes in. She and* TEDDY *start to each other as* HUBERT *follows* MARGARET *in. There is a pause.* HUBERT *and* TEDDY *look steadily at each other.*]

TEDDY. Now, father, I've done nothing on earth I'm ashamed of in the slightest degree.

SCOTTY. Mr. Gloucester——

HUBERT. Were you here all night? [*Ignoring* SCOTTY.]

TEDDY. Yes, we were. And I've done nothing that I'm ashamed of, I tell you.

MARGARET. You believe her, Hubert?

HUBERT. Believe her? Why should I?

SCOTTY. Mr. Gloucester, this thing isn't at all the way it looks.

HUBERT. Damn you! You——

TEDDY. Oh, don't, please. Do you believe I've done a rotten, low down thing, or don't you?

HUBERT. My God! How do I know?

MARGARET. Hubert!

SCOTTY. Mr. Gloucester, you must——

HUBERT. If you haven't, why are you here?

TEDDY. If you don't know that I'm not lying I don't care what you think.

MARGARET. Theodora, *explain* it all to him. Hubert, listen——

HUBERT. What is there to listen to? What is there to explain?

TEDDY. Nothing. I wouldn't try to explain for anything on earth.

SCOTTY. You've got to listen, Mr. Gloucester. The others were with us that first night and Ted and I

motored all day yesterday, and came here last evening just to have a look at the place—and expected to be back in town by ten o'clock. The storm was terrific and we had to stay. We simply *had* to.

HUBERT. That's a *fine* story! By God, it's just as bad to throw your reputation away as it is to—to——

MARGARET. Hubert!

HUBERT. It *is*. What in the name of heaven do you mean—acting like the commonest, lowest kind of a thing? Does nothing mean anything to you but this brazen, disreputable, loose—Where do you get it? Where does it come from? What have you done with your bringing up? How do you expect me to believe —*anything* but the—My God! What am I to believe?

MARGARET. That she's your daughter. That all the other things you've let her do—have done this. That she needs your help now as she never needed it before. [*To* TEDDY]. Theodora, you are going to *marry* this boy, aren't you?

SCOTTY. Of course, she is. We're engaged.

TEDDY. Oh no, we're not.

HUBERT. What? What do you say?

TEDDY. I'm not engaged to him.

SCOTTY. Ted!

MARGARET. But didn't you expect to be?

TEDDY. Perhaps. Probably. I don't know. I was considering.

HUBERT. Oh, you were! There'll be no more of that. You'll announce your engagement at once.

TEDDY. Why should I? What good will that do? How can that change anything?

HUBERT. At least there'd be some faint hope of

persuading people that you haven't quite gone to the dogs—that you wouldn't have been quite so wild as to go off with him, if you weren't going to marry him. It's a very little thing, but at least, it's the only thing we can do.

SCOTTY. Ted—listen! Come and marry me now—quick. We'll go on to another town and telephone back to your father that we've eloped.

TEDDY. What?

MARGARET. That's a very good idea—Theodora, really it is. The best possible thing you can do.

HUBERT. Yes, it is. Do it! Do it—and get at it quick.

TEDDY. I don't want to.

HUBERT. What?

TEDDY. I don't want to.

HUBERT. It isn't a question of what you want—but a question of saving yourself.

TEDDY. Saving myself from what? I can take care of myself.

HUBERT. So you thought. And this is what you got yourself into. You need *me* now. Why do you refuse to do the one thing there is to do? Why do you refuse to do this for my sake?

TEDDY. I'd do a good deal for your sake, Dad, but I can't marry somebody I don't want to—for your sake.

HUBERT. And why don't you want to marry him?

TEDDY. Because I don't love him like that.

HUBERT. You probably love him as much as you're capable of loving anybody.

TEDDY. You must let me be the judge of that. I can't marry you, Scotty. I know now. I'm sorry.

[SCOTTY *turns away.*]

MARGARET. Be careful, dear, don't make another mistake with this serious thing.

TEDDY [*Almost breaking at* MARGARET'S *tenderness, but controlling herself*]. I'm trying not to. [*To her father.*] Why do you ask me to marry him when I tell you I don't want to? *I don't love him that way,* I tell you. What has anything else got to do with it? How can you be so stupid and old-fashioned and afraid? Of course, I've done a perfectly idiotic thing and I'm just as sorry as I can be. But what has that got to do with the rest of my life? What if people do talk and tell a few lies about me? I'm not going to sneak and do a trumped up thing as though I were guilty. If you can't take me home now, Dad, and hold up your head and say—"This is my daughter. I trust her and know she hasn't done anything wrong"—then I never want to go home *at all.*

HUBERT. And if you don't obey me—if you don't marry this boy—I don't *want* you to come home.

MARGARET. Hubert!

HUBERT. Are you going to do it?

TEDDY. No!

[HUBERT *goes out quickly.*]

MARGARET. Teddy!

TEDDY. No!

SCOTTY. Ted!

TEDDY. No!

[*The curtain falls and remains down a moment to denote a lapse of thirty-two hours.*]

ACT II

SCENE III

Twelve o'clock the following morning.

[MARGARET *comes in from the left wearing the simple black gown of scene II, without her coat and hat. She goes into the alcove where she examines and sorts several pairs of curtains which are on the table.*]

HEYFER [*Coming in through the outer door which is open*]. Good mornin'. [*He carries a basket covered with a towel.*]

MARGARET. Good morning.

HEYFER. Yere's yer dinner. Do ye want yer supper brought over, too?

MARGARET. Yes—I think so. I'm not sure yet. And isn't there a woman near here who would like to come in and clean up a little and wash those dishes?

HEYFER. I ain't heard o' none wantin' to do anything like that fer some time. How long do ye calk'late stayin'?

MARGARET. I don't know exactly. Does it matter?

HEYFER. Wall no—in one way it don't, but the folks round here keep askin' *me*, an' they think it's kinda funny I don't know.

MARGARET. I'm sorry not to be able to keep them informed.

HEYFER. I s'pose ye think it ain't none o' their business but some things is enough to make even the dead say a little somethin'.

MARGARET. And may *I* say a little something?

HEYFER. Certainly.

MARGARET. This whole place must be cleaned—inside and out. Get a strong *young* man at it right away.

HEYFER. I guess I'm about the youngest round here, an' I'm pretty busy. I guess maybe sometime durin' the summer I might git 'round to doin' a little somethin' fer ye.

MARGARET. Where are they all? There used to be plenty of people about here to do things.

HEYFER. They're all ridin' round in their Ford autimobiles. We live in a infernal age. Why, my grand-daughter Mamie ain't worth the powder to blow her up—runnin' into them ungodly movie shows every night of her life—gittin' home long after ten o'clock—first with one feller an' then with another, till nobody ain't got no notion, nohow, which one she's goin' ter marry—if any. The ungodly lawlessness that young folks is growin' up with now'days is a disgrace to their day an' generation. [MARGARET *laughs*]. You think it's funny?

MARGARET. Oh no—I just seem to have heard it all some place before.

HEYFER. Somethin' had ought to be done about it. Somethin' had ought. We're bringin' up a reckless daredevil good for nothin'—

TEDDY [*Coming in from outside, wearing old khaki riding clothes and a brown sweater*]. It's perfectly

glorious outside! Why don't you go out and run around a little, Aunt Margaret? It would make you feel like a rearing charger. Little spring things are coming up all over, and Oh, Mr. Heyfer, a little rabbit that looked just like you, sat on the wall and said "Git off this property! Who the hell are you?"

HEYFER [*Suddenly seeing* TEDDY'S *riding trousers*]. Law! You ben out ridin' already this mornin'? What on?

TEDDY. No—I ben waitin'. This is my waiting costume. Don't you like it? Best I could find in my wardrobe.

HEYFER. I can't say thet I do. I ben kind o' broke in to seein' 'em on a hoss—but not walkin' round on the carpet.

TEDDY. Oh, I'm sorry. I was afraid I'd look too much like the idle rich if I stayed much longer in the other one.

HEYFER. Well—as Ma says—there ain't no use tryin' ter understand city ways. There ain't nothin' to hitch to nor git hold on one way nor t'other—nohow. [*He goes out L. leaving the door open.*]

TEDDY. Inspiring creature! Oh—what *is* Dad going to do? He's had a day and a night to change. I don't believe he ever *is* going to. [*She stamps about restlessly and nervously.*]

MARGARET. Are *you?*

TEDDY. Never. Isn't it a joke? Just because I'm a girl! Scotty's strutting about in town, of course, as usual—while I'm waiting here for my father to forgive me. Isn't it priceless? A girl can be alone all day

with a man and nobody says a word—but *one night* in the most innocent accident, and she's damned. Lord, the things I could tell that have happened in the *day time!* [*Going to* MARGARET *and putting out her hand.*] Aunt Margaret, I give you good on this. You haven't once said I told you so. I know I've done a damn fool thing and I know I deserve all that's coming to me—but I think you know what it means to me for you to stick by me. [*Turning away quickly to hide her tears.*]

MARGARET [*Holding on to Teddy's hand*]. Teddy, I want to ask you one question.

TEDDY. Yes?

MARGARET. Are you sure you aren't coquetting with Scotty Wilbur now? Are you sure you don't intend to marry him after you've kept him dangling a little longer and made your father suffer a little more? Um?

TEDDY. No. I give you my word I'm not. If I loved Scotty, I'd marry him like a shot. But I don't. Of course that's a pretty weak argument—coming from me. I admit I don't know much about the divine passion but I know it hasn't hit me yet—and I'll never marry anybody till it does.

MARGARET. But the pity of it is you'll play with it so much you won't know it when it comes.

TEDDY. Oh yes, I will. I saw a boy once who was so sure *he'd* know that if he had said he loved me I would have *known* he did. I would have known he would have taken care of me all my life and that it was only up to me to be worth it.

MARGARET. Who was he?

TEDDY. You wouldn't know—he was just—oh just —*different.*

HEYFER [*Coming back with his basket empty*]. Ma says there ain't much ter do to yer dinner but to put it on the stove an' take it off again, when it's hot through, but she 'lowed she didn't know as you could even do that. [*He goes to the outer door,* TEDDY *follows imitating his walk.*] If you belonged to me I know what I'd do to you. [*He goes out and to the L., passing the window.*]

TEDDY. If you belonged to me I'd have your hair bobbed. Oh why doesn't Dad make a move one way or the other?

MARGARET. Well, if you won't give in and your father won't, the only thing I can think of for you to do is to share my little income with me and live in an economy you never even heard of.

TEDDY. Oh, you're awfully good, Aunt Margaret. But I couldn't do that. I couldn't.

MARGARET. Then what are you going to do?

EILEEN [*Rushing in from outside followed by* OLIVER.] Ted!

TEDDY. Oh—Eileen! [EILEEN *throws her arms about* TEDDY.] Hello, Oliver. [*Putting out her hand to him as she still holds* EILEEN.]

OLIVER. Hello, Teddy! [*Going to shake hands with* MARGARET.]

TEDDY [*To* OLIVER]. Well, you look like a funeral! Let's hear the worst. Everybody's very *busy* I s'pose. I haven't got a rag of character left to my back by this time. Have I? Don't look so stunned, Eileen. What's the news? Let's have it.

EILEEN. It's beastly! A beastly rotten shame the whole darn thing! [*Going to shake hands with* MARGARET.]

MARGARET. Have you seen Mr. Gloucester?

EILEEN. No. I tried to but he wouldn't let me.

OLIVER. So did I. He won't see any of us. Scotty has told us the whole business, Ted.

EILEEN. We might have kept it quiet if it hadn't been for Hallie. Mrs. Rainsford, did she phone you that Teddy had said she and Scott might motor out here?

MARGARET. Yes—but she didn't do it till two o'clock that night.

TEDDY. She waited till then so if we were here, Dad couldn't get here till morning. Nicely planned —wasn't it? Well—what are people saying?

EILEEN. *Well,* I went out to tea yesterday and to dinner—and a dance afterwards, and by the time I got home the story was—you'd done this several times before. They say that's what you keep this place for.

MARGARET. Oh, how can they be so cruel?

OLIVER. Don't, Eileen. What difference does it make what they say?

TEDDY. Oh, don't be delicate. I love the details. I s'pose Dad's hearing it all, too.

EILEEN. Mrs. Allister's rubbing it in. She's not missing this chance of getting back at you for all the snubs you've given *her.*

TEDDY. Mrs. Allister must be really and truly deeply shocked. She is such a pure and holy lily herself.

OLIVER. What are you going to do, Ted? You've got to do something.

EILEEN. You can't stay here.

TEDDY. Oh yes, I can—till I rot. Dad's got to give in. He's got to. He's wrong—just as wrong as he can be.

SCOTTY [*Coming in quickly*]. Hello! [*They all turn.*]

TEDDY [*After a pause*]. Hello!

SCOTTY. May I see you alone, Teddy?

EILEEN. Of course.

MARGARET. Come into the dining room. Or would you rather go outside?

EILEEN. It doesn't matter. [*She and* OLIVER *follow* MARGARET *out left, closing the door.*]

SCOTTY [*When he and* TEDDY *are alone*]. I've been with your father most of the time trying to get him to come and take you home without any question of marrying me one way or the other.

TEDDY. Thanks, old man.

SCOTTY. But I haven't made the slightest dent in him. I've never seen any one so angry in all my life. He's like a raging bull. Horribly cut up, too, Ted—gone to pieces. I'm sorry for him—I actually am.

TEDDY. So am I. But his way is not the way out.

SCOTTY. It's the only one under heaven I see. He'll never give in, but if *you* do he's going to be awfully wonderful and generous to you, Ted. If you don't—he's going to— He threatened—you know.

TEDDY. Threatened?

SCOTTY. Money and stuff.

TEDDY. Cutting me off? [*He nods. She laughs*

and walks away.] Oh, that's divine! That's the last touch. You go straight back to him and tell him I don't care whether I ever have a cent of his money or not.

SCOTTY [*Following her*]. Oh, Ted, don't. Don't lose your head! You can't live without your father. Now see here, tell him you'll marry me—announce the engagement and break it afterwards. I give you my word, Teddy, I won't try to make you stick—if you don't want to.

TEDDY. You're a brick, boy—you are. But don't you see I can't do that sort of stuff? It's getting awfully, awfully serious with me. I meant what I said to Dad with everything in me, and if I go back on it—I go back on myself. It doesn't hurt *you* a bit—or your reputation—or anything about you. I never promised to marry you. If I had, I'd come through. You know that—don't you? And I'm sorry, Scotty, I don't love you that way—but I don't.

SCOTTY. I'm so sorry about the whole rotten business I could kill myself.

TEDDY [*Taking his hand*]. Don't worry! It'll all come out in the wash. If we loved each other well enough we could snap our fingers and tell the whole lot to go sit on a tack. But we don't care—like that, do we?

SCOTTY [*Evading her eyes*]. Why I—you—*I* do.

TEDDY. Don't try to make a brave speech.

SCOTTY. If I only had money, Ted.

TEDDY. Yes, I know, I know. It's quite all right.

SCOTTY. But Ted dear—what are you going to do?

HALLIE [*Coming in from the outer door followed by* TREVOR]. Oh, Teddy, dearest! [*Her sympathy a little too extravagant.*]

TREVOR. Hello!

TEDDY. Hello, Trevor. Did you come to see the show, too? Tell the others to come back, Scotty.

TREVOR [*Taking her hand in both of his*]. This is rotten luck, old girl, isn't it? But we're all in it, you know. We're all red devils by this time.

HALLIE [*Sitting in a chair by the R. table*]. Oh yes—we're all in. Eileen and I, too. And I'm taking all on my shoulders I possibly can and telling everybody it was just the merest chance that we didn't *all* come out here.

EILEEN [*Coming back from the dining room*]. Hello, hello!

OTHERS. Oh, hello! [*Following* EILEEN *in*].

EILEEN. I say we stop talking and go back to town and let Ted alone.

TEDDY. Oh no, don't. I think it's charming of you to come out and bring me the latest bulletins. Have you any choice tid bits, Trevor?

TREVOR. Plenty. The things I've heard about myself since this thing began would fill a book. I wonder I'm not kicked out of every club in town.

TEDDY. You devil! The girls will chase you more than ever.

TREVOR. And as for Ollie—well—they haven't done a thing to him. No girl's safe with you after dark, old man, but Scotty—oh, I *say!* [*They all laugh.*]

OLIVER. Oh, shut up, Trevor. Drop it.

TEDDY. No—don't. Come on and tell us what they said about Scotty.

TREVOR. Scotty has a wife and child or two in every town in the state. [*They laugh again.*]

TEDDY. I'm so relieved. I was afraid they had said *I* led Scotty into temptation. As a matter of fact I did, of course.

HALLIE. But the worst thing they say about Scotty is that he only wants Ted's money—and compromised her so she'd have to marry him. That's what *I* resent more than anything. That's what I get perfectly purple in the face about, Teddy dear.

TEDDY. Yes, dearest, you still look a little pink.

OLIVER. You know one man who wants to marry you on any terms at any time—the sooner the better. You know that, Ted.

HALLIE. Gracious! Are you offering yourself publicly, Ollie? How touching!

OLIVER. Why not? I've done it often enough in private. Everybody knows that. If I could marry you this minute, Ted, it would be the greatest thing that could happen to me.

TEDDY. Oliver, you're the most adorable thing that ever lived.

TREVOR. Adorable—*but*—Ollie.

OLIVER. Oh, this isn't a joke, you know.

TREVOR. I'm not so emotional as Ollie, Ted—but I'm absolutely at your service. Will you take me?

HALLIE. Another great moment in a great man's life.

SCOTTY. I don't see anything so damned funny about it.

OLIVER. I don't either. It's up to us to kill this stuff and carry Ted through. If we can't we're no good.

EILEEN. That's what I say.

TREVOR. Now I've been *thinking.* Couldn't we start something like this—that you stayed all night at a neighbor's house and had just come over here in the morning when your father arrived, Ted?

TEDDY. Yes, I think that would be very convincing. Say I came out to spend the night with old Mr. Heyfer. He's attractive enough to account for *anything.*

OLIVER. Ted, you're a scream. Thank God you've got a sense of humor. About the best thing we can do is to treat it as a huge joke.

TREVOR. It is a rummy little joke. Isn't it, Scott?

HALLIE. Let's make it as absurd as possible. Scotty can describe the storm out here and when the people say "How *funny*—it didn't rain a drop in town" —he can make the storm worse and worse. Can't you, Scott? *Was* there *really* a storm?

SCOTTY. Oh no. It was a beautiful night. We stayed to see the moon come up.

TEDDY. All the fish stories you can possibly dig up won't be half as fishy as the truth. Scott and I weren't alone here that night. [*They all look at her quickly.*]

OTHERS. What?

TEDDY. I haven't even told Aunt Margaret this part of it. It's too much to expect even her generosity to believe. Scotty did have a drink or two and went to sleep—over there—and the storm raged—and the door opened—and a young man walked in—out of the

nowhere into the here—and we sat by the fire and talked—and talked—and talked. [*They laugh*]. You see—nobody *could* believe it.

EILEEN. And what was Scotty doing all this time?

TEDDY. Scotty was sleeping. [TEDDY *has been sitting in a small chair at C. with her back to the audience.*]

TREVOR. Oh! That was very careless of you, Scotty.

TEDDY [*Rising and going up to lean on the open door. The strong sunlight falls over her. A new note, tender and wistful, comes into her voice. They watch her, puzzled and interested but believing she is only joking*]. The strange young man said he lived in New York and thought some of the nice people he had met did rather asinine things. And then he said the storm was going to last all night and that I'd better go to bed. And I said I thought I would. So I took the young man's light and opened that door, and he said there was nothing to be afraid of—that he would take care of me—that his name was Billy Wade, and that he would never see me again, but he would never forget me, and then he said goodbye and I went upstairs, and when I came down in the morning—the door was open and the young man was gone—and—— [*She stops suddenly—after a slight pause* BILLY WADE *comes into sight in the doorway.*] Oh—how do you do?

BILLY. Good morning.

TEDDY. I—I—I—I was just talking about you. [*To the others.*] This is the strange young man.

BILLY [*Coming into the room*]. I came back to see

if by any chance you were still here. I was afraid you had some difficulty getting away. I hoped you had got back to town all right—and yet I hoped by some fluke I'd find you here. That's the only excuse I have for coming back. [TEDDY *and* BILLY *laugh*].

TEDDY. I think that's excuse enough—to come back to find a really old friend like me. But they don't believe the story I was telling them—how you blew in.

BILLY. Don't they? I can scarcely believe it myself. [*Looking at the others for the first time.*]

TEDDY. If he knows which one is Scotty—will you believe it? [*Appealing to all of them.*]

OLIVER. Try it.

TEDDY [*To* BILLY]. Which is the one who was asleep on the sofa that night?

BILLY [*Nodding at* SCOTTY]. This one of course.

TREVOR. How do you do it, Ted?

TEDDY. You never saw *him*—did you, Scott?

SCOTTY. What in the world are you trying to do, Ted?

TEDDY. Mr. Wade—this is Mr. Wilbur.

BILLY. How do you do?

SCOTTY. How do you do?

HALLIE. How very amusing you are, Ted. You always have something up your sleeve. What *is* this?

TEDDY. They don't believe you were here at all. Can't you say something to convince them?

BILLY. Nothing but just the truth.

TEDDY. But that's the last thing in the world they can possibly believe.

BILLY. The whole thing was sort of funny, wasn't it?

TREVOR. Quite funny. But we don't see the point yet.

TEDDY. I *am* telling the truth. I'm not fooling—really. You believe me, don't you?

HALLIE. It's a priceless story. You're as clever as the deuce. And we've actually *seen* the strange young man with our own eyes. And what shall we say when people say "But *would* she have been alone all night with Scott Wilbur if the strange young man *hadn't* fallen from the skies?"

TEDDY. How *dare* you say that to me, Hallie! How dare you! I've been the biggest fool in the world, I know, and I've walked right into a beautiful mess with my eyes wide open. I don't want anybody to be sorry for me. It's absolutely my own fault. But I do expect *you* Eileen, and you Ollie, not to think I'm telling a ridiculous lie and trying to put something over on you.

EILEEN. But we don't understand.

TEDDY. What if you *don't* understand? What difference does that make? And what difference does it make how it all looks? I've asked you to believe me—in spite of everything. A perfect stranger came in when things looked just as rotten as they possibly could—but he was big enough and kind enough to—to—trust me. And now he sees that you don't. You can go back to town and say I've told the most impossible lie. You can also say I'm not going to marry Scotty, and nobody knows *what* I'm going to do next, and I don't give a damn what *any* of you think.

[TEDDY *breaks for the first time and hurries out. There is a pause.*]

BILLY [*Looking slowly from one to the other*]. Do you mean you really don't believe I was here that night? [*Each one looks away without answering.*] I told you I was. I sat here in that chair—till morning—while she was upstairs and he was asleep—there. If it makes any great difference, one way or the other whether I was here or not, I'll do anything on earth to prove it.

TREVOR [*With a steady insolent look at* BILLY]. But there isn't anything you *can* do to prove it, old man. You just ask us to take your word for it—and that's all there is to it.

BILLY. And you do take my word—of course? [*Looking from* TREVOR *to* OLIVER.]

OLIVER. We take Miss Gloucester's word. It isn't necessary to discuss it further.

BILLY. Yes—I see you believe everything she says. You're her friends and know her well. You couldn't possibly be rotten enough to doubt her in any way. She's lucky to have you to stand by and fight for her. I think I'll wait around—in case she needs somebody who *knows* she isn't lying. [*Controlling his blazing anger he goes outside quickly.*]

TREVOR. Charming person! Wonder where Ted dug him up?

HALLIE. Somebody who lives round here and Ted's making it worth while for him to——

EILEEN. *Hallie*—how *can* you!

HALLIE. Now don't take that tone with me. I'm just as sorry as *you* are that Ted told such a cock

and bull story, but I'm not going to be fool enough to pretend to believe it. Why in the name of Heaven couldn't she have told Scott—if it's true?

OLIVER. It *is* true. But don't tell anybody else—for God's sake. Let's shut up about the whole infernal business.

EILEEN. I'd believe Ted Gloucester above everybody else on earth. But it would be the *worst possible* thing we could do for her—to try and make anybody else believe this story—and you've all got to promise that you'll never breathe it to a living soul. [*She looks at the two men. They nod seriously to her.*] Hallie?

HALLIE. I scarcely think you have to say that to *me.*

EILEEN. And I'm going to make Ted swear she'll never tell it again. [*She goes out into the dining room, closing the door.*]

OLIVER [*After a long look at* HALLIE]. That's a dead serious thing we've sworn to.

HALLIE. Yes—not to tell anybody there were two men here instead of one. You look so tragic, Ollie. [*She laughs.*]

OLIVER. Ted's up against it. We all think we can get away with anything. This is one time we didn't. [*He goes out.* TREVOR *goes with him.* SCOTTY *starts to follow them.*]

HALLIE. Scott, don't go. [*He stops, going slowly back to her. She is still in the chair.*] Isn't it awful? I'm so sorry for Ted.

SCOTTY. It's the rottenest deal a girl ever got.

HALLIE. And isn't it marvelous the way she takes it? I'm so sensitive—if it had happened to me it would

have killed me. You've been marvelous about the whole thing, Scott. I'm awfully sorry for *you*—too.

SCOTTY. You needn't be.

HALLIE. But I am. You've done everything under the shining heaven you can be expected to do. Don't sacrifice yourself, old dear.

SCOTTY. Sacrifice myself?

HALLIE. What's this tale Mrs. Allister's telling about her father cutting Ted off if she doesn't marry you?

SCOTTY. That damned Allister woman ought to have her throat cut.

HALLIE. Oh, it's *true* then? You wouldn't be fool enough to be caught like *that?* You don't have to be quixotic about it. Ted's no ingenue. She knew what she was doing all right.

SCOTTY. She was only in a dare devil mood. She didn't mean any more harm than a baby.

HALLIE. *Didn't* she? You are wonderful about it, dear. I'm crazy about the way you're taking it. So awfully generous. She's such a ninny not to grab you —now that she's got you.

SCOTTY. Grab me nothing! She doesn't want me.

HALLIE. Oh—I can't believe that.

SCOTTY. It's so, all right.

HALLIE. Poor boy! I can't bear to see you unhappy. I wish there was something I could do to buck you up. When you're lonely come and play with me. I understand you so well.

SCOTTY. Do you, Hallie? [*Looking at her and moving a little closer to her.*]

HALLIE. All you need is money to make you per-

fect. I think it would be *awful* to have your *personality* hurt by anything so disgusting as no money.

SCOTTY. But I'll never make any.

HALLIE. Oh, cheer up! God knows the men a girl *can* love are scarce enough. You ought to have a very large income settled on you for merely being one of *those*. And Ted hasn't *all* the money there is in the world, you know. [*Using her lip stick as enticingly as possible.*] Are my lips all right?

SCOTTY. Perfect!

HALLIE. Are they really? [*Rising and putting her hands on his shoulders.*]

EILEEN [*Coming in quickly and stopping as she sees what Hallie is doing*]. Well—I don't think this is a particularly good time for that sort of thing.

HALLIE. It's a good time for you to mind your own business.

EILEEN. This is my business. Ted's come to her senses and is going to do the only sane thing there is to do. She's going to—— [TEDDY *comes in. There is a pause as they turn to her.*]

TEDDY. May I speak to Scotty alone—please?

HALLIE. Of course, dear—of course. And Ted, don't go to pieces again. You must be awfully brave. I hope it isn't *too late* to save yourself. I suppose the only thing you can do is to live it down—the way most people do. And you can count on me to do everything in my power to help you.

TEDDY. But, I don't intend to lie down and die.

HALLIE. No matter how ghastly people are to you or how many drop you and cut you completely you just mustn't mind. You *must* be brave.

TEDDY. The cutting and dropping will be all on *my* side.

HALLIE. Oh—very well—if you don't want any help—. Goodbye, Scott. See you very soon, old man. [*She goes out with insolent bravado.*]

TEDDY. I'm not going to be insulted the rest of my life for this.

EILEEN. That's right, Ted. Hold your head so high no one can touch you. Shall I tell the others what you're going to do?

TEDDY. Yes—please.

EILEEN. And I won't let them come back to speak to you now. Buck up, Ted. I'll settle Hallie. [EILEEN *goes out.*]

TEDDY. Scott—I've got myself where people won't believe me and where my friends can't help me. If you still want me, I'll marry you.

SCOTTY. Ted!

TEDDY. Go in town and tell Dad I'll marry you—that we'll *blaze* and have the most gorgeous wedding anybody ever had.

SCOTTY. Now you're yourself again. I adore you.

TEDDY. Oh no, you don't.

SCOTTY. I do.

TEDDY. Let's be honest. It's a jolly good thing for us both—and we'll probably get on as well as most people do who pretend to be in love.

SCOTTY. But I *do* love you, Ted.

TEDDY. Yes—with all my accessories. Now let's play fair and run straight and make the best of it.

SCOTTY. Dear old girl, I'll try to make you happy.

TEDDY. Well, everybody's going to *think* I'm

happy. I can promise you that, and if we don't make a go of it we'll get our divorce right off the bat.

SCOTTY. Oh, Ted, don't go into it that way.

TEDDY. Why not? Lord knows it's better to go into it *prepared* to have a divorce than to suddenly be hit in the head with it later.

SCOTTY. I can't bear to have you take it this way.

TEDDY. I'm only being sensible. I'll make a settlement on you now, Scott, and the whole transaction will be very neat.

SCOTTY. That's horrible.

TEDDY. Slush! I'm only calling things by their own names. What right have we to expect anything else? We've set our own tune. Now we'll have to dance to it, and for Heaven's sake let's dance well.

SCOTTY. But——

BILLY [*Coming into the outer door*]. Pardon me. I don't want to butt in, but I would like to talk to you a minute before I go back—if I may.

TEDDY. Of course you may.

SCOTTY. But Ted, you must hurry back to town now.

TEDDY. I have to change. You must hurry in yourself.

BILLY. I'll take you in.

TEDDY. Oh—can you? Go on then, Scott—and Aunt Margaret and I will come with Mr. Wade.

SCOTTY. Not at all. I can't let anybody else take you.

BILLY. Oh, I think you can trust me to get Miss Gloucester in safely.

SCOTTY. I'll take her in myself.

BILLY [*To* TEDDY]. Do you want me to go—or shall I wait to take you in?

TEDDY. I want you to wait.

BILLY [*Looking at* SCOTTY]. I'll wait.

SCOTTY [*Looking at* TEDDY]. How soon will you get her in?

BILLY. Just as soon as Miss Gloucester *wants* to go.

SCOTTY [*Starting to the door and stopping to speak to Billy*]. You seem to be rather interested in the situation.

BILLY. You can't blame me for that, can you?

SCOTTY. But you must realize that it doesn't matter in the least whether you were here or not the other night. [*He goes out.*]

BILLY. It matters a good deal to *me.* I suppose you're disgusted with me for coming back. I suppose I made everything a thousand times worse than if I'd stayed away. I'm sorry.

TEDDY. Nothing could make it any worse. I gummed it up as much as I possibly could.

BILLY. I was a fool not to have stayed right through—with you—to have told it all myself to everybody.

TEDDY. I didn't want you to. And it wouldn't have done any good. As Hallie says people will say, "Would she have been alone all night with Scott, if the strange man *hadn't* fallen from the skies?" You see it's a hopeless mess—any way you look at it. And I was stupid to have said anything about you. But it seems a pity not to be able to tell the most beautiful thing that ever happened to me.

BILLY. They're blockheads.

TEDDY. Oh no. They're just my friends. Why should I expect anybody to believe me?

BILLY. I'd believe anything you told me.

TEDDY [*Looking at him deeply with a sudden tenseness*]. But you don't know me.

BILLY. Oh, yes I do. I know you better than I ever knew *anybody*. I've thought about you every minute since I saw you and I came back just to find you.

TEDDY. And you found me in a worse fix than when you went away, but I've taken the only way out there is. I'm going to marry Mr. Wilbur—and I won't lose my father's money—and I'm not going under.

BILLY. Marry him? Are you only doing it because—of this thing that happened?

TEDDY. He's marrying me for my money and I'm marrying him to save my reputation.

BILLY. That's *hell*.

TEDDY. Is it? It's often done, you know.

BILLY. You don't have to do that.

TEDDY. My father has a right to force me into it, I suppose.

BILLY. He has *not*.

TEDDY. What did *you* think when you found me here alone with a man?

BILLY. I knew when I saw your eyes that you didn't have anything to hide.

TEDDY. But you think I did a deadly common stupid thing coming out here just to be reckless—by way of amusing myself?

BILLY. Yes—I do. But why in the name of Christopher should that put a crimp in your whole life and

make you do a much worse thing now—marry a man you don't love?

TEDDY. It's the only way out.

BILLY. No, it's not. You're in bad—but you could come out big.

TEDDY. How?

BILLY. By turning this into something big.

TEDDY. It's easy enough for you to talk. You're a man. Men can do anything.

BILLY. If they *will*. So can a girl.

TEDDY [*Going to sit in the chair above the table*]. Oh no—one dose of a thing like this for a girl—and she's done for if she hasn't any money.

BILLY [*Sitting near her at the table*]. Listen. How much money do you need to live?

TEDDY. I don't know. I don't know. Dad gives me twenty-four thousand a year and then pays all my debts. I have three thousand a year of my very own from my mother and this little place—so that doesn't leave much if I throw Dad over? Does it?

BILLY. Well, I've just thrown up a job of ten thousand a year which seemed like a million to me.

TEDDY. Given it up?

BILLY. Yes. I got just what was coming to me. I knew it was crooked when I went into it. I knew the man stole from the Government, and called it big business, but I fell for it—and I stuck because of what it could do for me—but it was eating into me all the time good and hard. And do you know what happened to me? After I saw you the other night I hated it so—I went back and chucked it. I haven't got a job and it won't be so easy to get another one—but I can

look myself in the face—and I'm free. And I don't see why you can't do the same.

TEDDY. You don't know what you're talking about.

BILLY. The whole point is this. Do you *want* what you're going back to or don't you?

TEDDY. It doesn't matter whether I want it or not. It's what I've got to take.

BILLY. Do you hate it?

TEDDY. That doesn't matter either.

BILLY. Are you going to let it get you—so you'll be just like the rest of them?

TEDDY. I am just like them. I'm one of them. What else can I be? I thought for a few minutes that I could defy it and run away from it. I thought I'd give my *soul* not to have to go back. It all seemed so horrible. I thought I never could *face* it and bluff and fight and pretend that I didn't care.

BILLY. You do care! You *do* hate it!

TEDDY. I don't dare to let myself hate it—or I never can come through. I don't dare *think* what I'm going to do—but I know—oh I know. [*She puts her head on her arms on the table with a sob.*]

BILLY. Then why in the name of God do you do it? How can you—*you*—do anything you're ashamed of?

TEDDY [*Rising suddenly and going to the outer door*]. But I can't live without my father.

BILLY [*Following her*]. With this little place? What's the reason you can't? You can take care of yourself. I'll help you. That's where I belong—outdoors. I could make this little farm *sit up*—if you'd help me.

TEDDY. How could I help?

BILLY. Work—with your own hands.

TEDDY. I can't. I don't know how.

BILLY. Learn. I'll help you. I'll go halves. I'll put what I've got into it.

TEDDY. If I try—with *all I've got*—if I work—do you think I can take care of myself?

BILLY. I *know* you can.

TEDDY. How wonderful of you to believe in me! I don't see how you can.

BILLY. I do. Believe in yourself.

TEDDY. But it's all so strange. I've never done anything like this in my life.

BILLY. Don't be afraid. You're stronger now than you ever were.

TEDDY. No, I'm not. I'm awfully weak. I may fail.

BILLY. You can't. You've got hold of something to fight for.

TEDDY. Oh—I'm afraid I'm doing something wild again.

BILLY. No, you're not.

TEDDY. I'll fall down.

BILLY. No, you won't. Pull yourself up. Pull yourself up high.

TEDDY. I'll try. I'll try.

BILLY. No—you're going to *do* it.

TEDDY. I will—*I will!!*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT III

SCENE: *Outside of the Gloucester cottage. Afternoon—Three Months Later.*

The lawn before the cottage. The small white frame house is seen at left. The single door opens on to the lawn. The house is a story and a half high with small windows and solid wooden shutters, faded to a soft green. The ground slopes up at back to an old stone wall. Three stone steps, at center back, lead to the road. At right the lawn extends off stage where a group of trees is seen. A rustic table, two rustic armchairs are at left center and a garden bench at right. The scene is simple in the extreme—full of quiet brightness.

EILEEN, *wearing sport clothes, is selecting a golf club from her bag. She draws an iron out and practices a stroke.* MARGARET *sits below the table sewing.*

EILEEN. I'm off my feed entirely. Playing a wretched game lately.

MARGARET. It always sort of comes and goes, doesn't it?

EILEEN. Yes—especially goes.

MARGARET. Is anybody coming out to play with you?

EILEEN. Teddy says Trevor and Ollie are coming. Mrs. Rainsford, Ted never speaks of her father to

me. Would you think me awfully impertinent if I asked if she ever hears from him?

MARGARET. She never has—not a word. It's been three months now.

EILEEN. Awful, isn't it?

MARGARET. Yes—and yet it has *made* Theodora.

EILEEN. But the future, Mrs. Rainsford! It will be horrible if they never make up.

MARGARET. I used to think so—but—[*she shakes her head.*]

EILEEN. You don't mean you'd like her to marry Billy?

MARGARET. Why not?

EILEEN. Oh! I think perhaps I ought to say this to you. You know we promised never to tell anybody that Billy was here that night. We knew it would do Teddy more harm than good. But Hallie *has* told—and it's started everybody's tongue off again.

MARGARET. Oh! Why did she do it?

EILEEN. She did it to stir Mr. Gloucester up and widen the breach between him and Teddy. She's afraid Scotty may get Ted with her father's money—after all.

MARGARET. It's hideous!

EILEEN. Isn't there something you can do to make Ted go to her father? I've heard that Mr. Gloucester is beginning to melt. Can't you do something?

MARGARET. I don't know that I want to.

EILEEN. Don't you want them to be reconciled? [MARGARET *thinking, does not answer.*] When the boys come, tell them to give me a shout. [*She goes into the cottage.* MARGARET *goes on sewing. After*

a moment HUBERT GLOUCESTER *comes in from the R.*]

MARGARET. Hubert!

HUBERT. Where's Theodora?

MARGARET [*Rising*]. Out—somewhere about. [*Going to him and giving him both her hands.*]

HUBERT. Margaret—if you've let something go on out here and haven't told me, I'll never forgive you—never.

MARGARET. What? [*Drawing away from him.*]

HUBERT. If you've let Ted get mixed up in another affair and haven't warned me——

MARGARET. What do you mean?

HUBERT. Why haven't you told me? Why haven't you kept me informed about every thing she was doing?

MARGARET. Why should I have told you anything about Theodora? Didn't you give her up when she needed you most?

HUBERT. What *is* this thing out here? What's going on?

MARGARET. You'll have to tell me what you mean.

HUBERT. The story is all over town that another boy was here with her that night while Scotty was drunk and asleep—that *this* boy was the reason she so suddenly refused to marry Scotty—that he gave up a ten thousand dollar job in New York to come here and work for her—that he wants her money—and is making love to her. Is it true? Is it true?

MARGARET. No—well—yes—some of it.

HUBERT. How much?

MARGARET. Some of the bare facts. The boy was here—yes—Billy Wade. He came in out of the storm

that night—and stayed with her—and kept her from being terrified.

HUBERT. And he *did* come back?

MARGARET. Yes—but not because he wants her money.

HUBERT. But he *did* give up his job?

MARGARET. Yes. But——

HUBERT. But not because he wants her money! Good heavens, Margaret, have you been taken in like that? Why, the fellow's a bounder—an adventurer.

MARGARET. Hubert!

HUBERT. How could you be so gullible? I let Ted stay here with you because I thought it would be the best thing on earth for her. And now *this* thing bumps me in the head.

MARGARET. But it isn't true.

HUBERT. Oh, yes it is. Eileen tells me they had all sworn to keep still—never to tell it—but it seems Hallie wants Scott Wilbur and is still afraid Ted will marry him—so she's broken her word and told the whole thing to stir up another scandal.

MARGARET. Oh yes, it's *very* plain. Of course Hallie told it—and it's all distorted and twisted.

HUBERT. They say they were *all* drinking that night—and there's no telling *what* happened to make Ted give Scotty up.

MARGARET. Hubert! Hubert! You don't believe such stuff.

HUBERT [*Sitting on the bench at R.*]. Oh, I'm in despair, Margaret—I don't know what to think or what to do.

MARGARET. Teddy certainly has paid for that one

foolish headstrong thing. Now they're making something ugly out of her really good and beautiful friendship with this boy.

HUBERT. You've been taken in, Margaret.

MARGARET. Oh no. I haven't. I happen to know the truth. I suppose it does sound like a fairy story if you hear it with sordid ears that can't believe in anything unselfish and disinterested.

HUBERT [*Rising*]. God! And you let Teddy be fooled too. Is this fellow making love to her?

MARGARET. You'll have to ask her that.

HUBERT. You've made a hero of him evidently. Who is he? What is he?

MARGARET. You'll have to judge for yourself.

HUBERT. Is she going to marry him?

MARGARET. I don't know. Hubert, I've been absolutely quiet in this whole thing—merely watching Theodora work out her own salvation—but I won't be now. If you try to kill the good that is beginning to come to her—I'll fight for her, and I'll fight you.

HUBERT. Do you promise you won't tell her I'm here? Not say one *word* of all this till I see her?

MARGARET. Yes—I promise that.

HUBERT. Where am I likely to find her?

MARGARET. I actually don't know. Perhaps in the lower garden.

[HUBERT *goes up the steps and off along the road to left. After a pause* MARGARET *sits and takes her sewing.* BILLY *whistling comes swinging along the road from the R. He wears blue overalls and carries a scythe.*]

BILLY [*Stopping by the steps to examine the handle*].

You can see through to the other side of the brook now. About two more days and I'll have all this side cleared.

MARGARET. Splendid!

BILLY. Has Ted come in yet?

MARGARET. Not yet.

BILLY. I struck another berry patch all choked up. Find something new on this little place every day. Gosh—it's fun.

TEDDY [*Coming in through the trees at R*]. Billy, the black hen has twenty-seven chickens and one duck.

BILLY. Ye gods! The first scandal on the farm.

[TEDDY *is wearing blue overalls and a large straw hat. She carries an old market basket with some working tools in it.*]

MARGARET. I speak for the duck. You must let me have *something.*

TEDDY. Well—we'll see what kind of a disposition he has. If he's a grouch you can roast him. What's the matter? [*As* MARGARET *wipes her eyes.*] You have been crying?

MARGARET. No—of course not.

TEDDY. No tears around here, young woman, or you'll have to pay a fine. [*Goes to* MARGARET *and kisses her.*] You blessed thing!

MARGARET [*Going to the door of the cottage and turning*]. Oh, my dear children——

BILLY [*Going to her*]. *Is* anything the matter?

MARGARET. I'm so afraid for you somehow.

BILLY. Why?

MARGARET [*Putting a hand on his shoulder*]. Be strong and *sure*, won't you?

BILLY [*Putting a hand over hers*]. What about?

MARGARET. About everything. [*Goes in.*]

[BILLY *stands looking after her*].

TEDDY. Aunt Margaret's got the gloom. This is Saturday afternoon, you ought to have on your Sunday clothes.

BILLY [*Throwing himself down on the grass*]. Well —have you done everything today you thought you were going to do when you went to sleep last night?

TEDDY [*Beginning to wind the string which is dangling from her pocket*]. Just about. I got a new chicken coop made—a tiny weeny one for the debutantes.

BILLY. They're having a big season, aren't they?

TEDDY. And I got two roosters to stop fighting.

BILLY. How?

TEDDY. Sat on one of them and fought the other one myself. [BILLY *turns over on the grass and laughs.*] And I moved the pigs over into their new quarters and began painting the old ones.

BILLY. Painting the old pigs?

TEDDY. Their *quarters.*

BILLY. Their hind quarters?

TEDDY. You know I'm not going in for snappy dialogue. I'm working.

BILLY. I'm not—go on.

TEDDY. And I got up on the kitchen roof to see if I could find that leak and coming down I got that place in the stairs mended. I got every blooming weed out of the garden. Then I had to go and show Heyfer how to dig that ditch. He wasn't doing it *my* way at all.

BILLY. I'm sorry I missed that conversation.

TEDDY. Then I had to get a board nailed on.

BILLY. Good.

TEDDY. And then I got that. [*Sitting beside* BILLY *and showing him her thumb which is tied up in a rag.*]

BILLY. Bad! But you've still got both arms and legs. I think you've pulled through remarkably well —so far—considering the enterprises you've had your hands in—to say nothing of your feet. Where's the other one? Oh, yes. [*Looking for the foot she is sitting on. They both laugh and lean toward each other impulsively.*]

BILLY. You've got two more freckles on your nose.

TEDDY. You've got a button off your shirt. I'll sew it on for you. Wasn't I pretty magnificent to darn those socks for you last night?

BILLY. Oh! [*Looking at his feet*]. I've been wondering all day what was the matter with my feet.

TEDDY. I thought it would be a good idea to do it *once* so I'd never be requested to do it again. [*They laugh again like children.*]

BILLY. Is anybody coming out for tea?

TEDDY. I hope so. Why?

BILLY. It amuses 'em to come out and see the flowers bloom, but they haven't the dimmest idea what you've gone through to make them.

TEDDY. That doesn't matter. It's been the most beautiful summer of my whole life.

BILLY. Would you want another one just like it?

TEDDY. Of course if it were necessary, but it won't be. Each summer is going to be easier and better.

BILLY. This little farm is just a spring board to jump from—to something else. I'm not afraid of money, Ted. Good work'll always make it. But gosh —aren't you sick of measuring everything with money? I want to do some things that are worth doing whether they ever make a damn cent or not, and some things that are worth losing money on—just because you want to try. And some that are worth spending all you can get on—just because they ought to be done.

TEDDY. Of course—things for other people, Billy.

BILLY. Yes.

TEDDY. I never used to think of that at all—but oh —I've found out so much, since I've known you, Billy.

BILLY. Me, too—since I've known you. I've got some great schemes to tell you about. I'm awfully ambitious, Ted. But I'll have to work like the devil to make the money first to tackle the big things.

TEDDY. I'll help.

BILLY. But there are things ahead we've got to look square in the face. Winter's coming and it will be harder than the summer—lonelier for you. Not so many friends coming out—and you'll be bored.

TEDDY. Will you be bored?

BILLY. It doesn't matter about me.

TEDDY. And how about you *and* me?

BILLY. That's it. That's the thing I've got to face. How can there be any you *and* me?

TEDDY. How can there be anything else? Aren't we going to be together forever?

BILLY. Are we?

TEDDY. I can't imagine anything else—unless the

world comes to an end, and then we'd go on together anyway.

BILLY. Do you mean you could—marry me?

TEDDY. Why, I've always taken that for granted since—well—since—I can't tell when it began—any more than I can think of it ending. [BILLY *puts his face down in the grass before her, grasping her hands.*] Billy—look at me. Look at me. [*She lifts his head and holds it in her arms.*] Isn't that the way you've always thought it was?

BILLY. I didn't dare. Oh, Teddy, I don't know whether you realize it yet—what it would really mean to give up all you've had—forever. To begin all over again—at the very bottom. What if you find you just can't get on without it? You'd hate me then.

TEDDY. Why do you think about what I've had? It's what we'll do that matters. And we'll never stop doing. The end is in *us*—not in anything else. We may be two great birds in the air—you and I, we may see things no one has ever seen before. It's in us the magic is.

BILLY. It's in you. If you love me I'm not afraid of anything. [*He kisses her lips in a long kiss. A whistle is heard. He springs up.*] Someone's coming.

TEDDY. I thought you said you weren't afraid of anything.

BILLY. I'm not. [*He tries to catch her. She runs to the door and goes in.*]

OLIVER [*Coming in from the R. followed by* TREVOR]. Hello, there! You look as though somebody had given you a gold mine.

BILLY. Somebody has. Hello!

TREVOR. How are you? [*Correct and condescending in his golf clothes.*]

OLIVER. Where's Ted? Aren't we going to have some golf?

BILLY. Eileen is. I don't know about Ted. I'll tell her you're here.

OLIVER. Eileen here?

BILLY. Yes, she came out yesterday.

EILEEN [*Coming from the house*]. Hello—hello. It's a wonder you wouldn't get here sooner.

OLIVER. Hello, Eileen.

TREVOR. Greetings.

EILEEN. Aren't you going to play, Billy?

BILLY. I'm afraid I can't, thanks. Me for the tub. [*Starting to the house.*]

TREVOR. I say, old man—have you heard the rumor that Gloucester is coming out to snatch Teddy out of this? Kill the fatted calf in a blaze of glory and all that sort of thing?

BILLY [*Looking from one to the other*]. No—I haven't.

TREVOR. I thought you'd be awfully glad to know it. It would let you out of a nasty situation.

BILLY. What?

TREVOR. You don't relish the story, I'm sure, that you're after Ted's money, and if you gracefully retire, that will kill it pretty quickly.

BILLY [*After a pause*]. I thought Ted's money was a thing of the past—out of the running entirely.

TREVOR. Oh, *did* you? I wouldn't have supposed you were so unsophisticated. That's just a little

temporary chastisement on father's part of course. Ted Gloucester's going to be one of the richest girls in the country some day. That's why I say I know you'll be glad to clear out—so you won't be accused of making a grandstand play for her money under rather disagreeable circumstances.

BILLY. What circumstances, for instance?

TREVOR. Such as chucking your job—rushing out here to Ted and persuading her to stay out here—after she's just decided to marry Wilbur.

BILLY. Oh yes. I have been a nut. Of course that's what you think I'm doing. All of you I suppose.

TREVOR. We're merely checking up the details as other people see them.

BILLY. Yes, circumstantial evidence.

TREVOR. We're only telling you that now is the psychological time for you to step out—as it's in the air that father's going to make a move.

OLIVER. We merely mean that we know you wouldn't want to stand in Ted's way if this *is* going to happen.

BILLY. Oh yes. I see it all very clearly from your standpoint.

TREVOR. There isn't much of any other standpoint to see it from—is there?

BILLY. None—except mine—which cuts no ice whatsoever with you—but a good deal with me. You couldn't possibly get it through you that Ted Gloucester means a damned sight more to me without her money than she does with it. Could you? That would be a little too much to expect *you* to believe.

TREVOR. Right you are—a little too much.

BILLY. In other words, you think I'm a skunk.

TREVOR. Oh no—just human.

BILLY. Damn your filthy, low-down—— [*Starting at* TREVOR.]

EILEEN. Please!

OLIVER [*After a pause*]. Well—that's the way things look, Wade. And it's easy enough for you to show that there's nothing in it.

TREVOR. Perfectly easy—by merely retiring. [EILEEN *motions for* OLIVER *and* TREVOR *to leave her alone with* BILLY. OLIVER *goes out at R.*] A magnificent opportunity to prove that you believe the moon is made of green cheese. But don't expect other people to believe it, dear boy. [TREVOR *goes out after* OLIVER.]

BILLY. Do you think what they do?

EILEEN. No—I don't. But the case is too strong against you to convince them.

BILLY. Damn their souls.

EILEEN. No use damning them, Billy. They're only saying what other people think.

BILLY. Ted knows. Nothing else matters.

EILEEN. But something else does matter.

BILLY. Well?

EILEEN. Ted's going to get so tired and sick of this when the novelty wears off, she'll die. She couldn't any more live without what she used to have than she could fly.

BILLY. How do you know what she can live without?

EILEEN. I know her like a book. And I like you too well, Billy Wade, to see her make a fool of you.

BILLY. Don't worry about me.

EILEEN. It's the new thing that gets her and interests her. She likes new excitement. That's why she's been so amazing about all she's done out here. It was a novelty and *you* were new to her, Billy. Something she'd never come in contact with before. and she's flirted with you from a new standpoint altogether.

BILLY. Why are you telling me this, Eileen? You say you're her best friend.

EILEEN. I am—and I'm saying it because I honestly think if she married you it would be the worst possible thing that could happen to you both. You don't realize you're only a new experience to her.

BILLY. I can take care of myself, I think.

EILEEN. I've seen a good many other people who thought that too. Poor old Ollie hasn't given up hope yet.

BILLY. Oliver Comstock?

EILEEN. Of course. You don't think you're going to fare any better than he has—with all his charm and all his money, do you? It's because I like you, Billy, I'm saying this. And by Jove, I know you're too decent to hang on to her and try to keep her from going back to all the wonderful things that are waiting for her.

TEDDY. Hello boys—hello, everybody! [*Coming from the house, she carries a tray with glasses, spoons and paper napkins.* BILLY *hurries past her and out below the house.*]

TREVOR. What ho? [*Coming back.*]

TEDDY. What ho, yourself.

OLIVER [*Following* TREVOR *in*]. Hello, Ted.

TEDDY. Oh, Ollie, you must come and see my chickens. They know me now, every one of them.

OLIVER. Oh, come!

TEDDY. They do. They run like mad when I open the gate.

OLIVER. They'd be damn fools if they didn't.

TEDDY. That's the most impassioned thing you've said to me in ages. Keep it up. I've got eight hundred and eighty-eight. What do you think of that?

OLIVER. I think it's a big whopper!

[MARGARET *enters from the house with a pitcher of iced tea and a basket of gingerbread.*]

EILEEN. Oh, see Mrs. Rainsford. She looks good enough to eat. I'm starving.

OLIVER. How are you, Mrs. Rainsford?

MARGARET. Hello, Oliver. Are you thirsty?

OLIVER. All the way down.

TREVOR. Hello, Mrs. Rainsford. What's in the pitcher? It has a nice color.

TEDDY [*Pouring the tea*]. Iced tea. Nothing stronger on the place—unless you'd like a glass of hot milk.

TREVOR. No hot milk, thank you!

OLIVER [*Taking a bite of gingerbread*]. Lordy, this gingerbread's good!

MARGARET. Give Eileen some. It's Theodora's first attempt.

TREVOR [*Choking*]. My God! Why didn't you say so before?

OLIVER. Ted, I brought you some cocktails. Right here. [*Getting a bottle from his golf bag.*]

TEDDY. I'd rather you didn't—really. I don't like it.

EILEEN. Well, I do. Give me one, Oliver.

[EILEEN *and* TREVOR *sit on the bench.* MRS. RAINSFORD *sits below the table and takes up her sewing.*]

OLIVER. You mean you don't want me to open it, Ted?

TEDDY. Yes, please. I hate it.

TREVOR. Hate what?

TEDDY. Thinking you have to have a drink on all occasions.

TREVOR. It's the pleasantest thought I have.

TEDDY. I have a very good reason for despising it.

OLIVER. That's all right, Ted. I'm sorry.

TREVOR. Do you mean to say I don't get any?

OLIVER [*Putting the bottle back in the bag*]. I guess you can wait. [*He goes to sit on the stone steps.*]

TREVOR. The country certainly does peculiar things to people. Awfully upsetting—don't you think, Mrs. Rainsford?

MARGARET. Yes, it certainly upsets some things and sets *up* others. All the important things get more important and the worthless ones more and more worthless. Don't they?

TREVOR. I have a horrible suspicion from the gleam in your eye that you think I come under the head of more and more worthless.

TEDDY. You come under the head of nothing at all, Trevor.

OLIVER. What are you going to do this winter, Ted?

TEDDY. Stay right here. [*Moving about as she gives them more gingerbread.*]

OLIVER. That's impossible.

TEDDY. The joke of it is you're all sorry for me and I'm having the time of my life. I've discovered that too much money cheats people out of half the thrilling things in the world.

EILEEN. You sound like—Who was it said "It's easier for something to go through a camel than for something or other to—something?"

TREVOR. You mean it's easier for a camel than for a rich man to cross the desert without a drink.

TEDDY. I had my first lesson in milking this morning. Trevor, what would you do if you had to milk a cow?

TREVOR. I should ask the beast to excuse me.

TEDDY. She probably would, too.

OLIVER. You never looked so well in your life, Teddy.

TEDDY. Of course—I'm husky. No more smokes —no more nerves. I sleep all night and am interested all day. It's great to feel this way. Trevor, even you would get to like it. You'd wake up feeling like an ox instead of a shoestring.

TREVOR. I don't know that I'm so keen about the ox effect.

OLIVER [*To* TEDDY]. Well it's a miracle, nothing less, what you've done.

TEDDY. Any of you could do it if you had to.

MARGARET. Of course. You have more energy and daring and cleverness and intelligence for your age than any set of people in the world.

TREVOR. Mrs. Rainsford, I suspect you.

MARGARET. It's true—in spite of appearances. You have it all and you're throwing most of it away.

TREVOR. Am I included in this?

MARGARET. You haven't the faintest idea of your own importance.

TEDDY. You're not included in *that*, Trevor.

MARGARET. You're an institution—envied and imitated—dreamed of and read about. In every city, in every little town, all the way down, there's a set of you—and you *might* be an absolutely dynamic power for good. [*Smiling at them tolerantly she goes slowly across the lawn to the R.*]

OLIVER. Might be? What are we?

MARGARET. An equally great one for harm. You don't mind my saying so—quite honestly—do you? [*She goes out.*]

TREVOR. Neat little parting shot.

TEDDY. What do *you* think we are—"quite honestly?"

TREVOR. I think *I'm* a very charming person with a great many friends almost as charming as I am.

TEDDY. Trevor, I love you very much but I can't quite keep up with the way you love yourself. Come and see the chickens—they'll appreciate you.

TREVOR. I know a great many who do.

EILEEN. Don't look at *me*.

[TEDDY *starts off with* EILEEN *and* TREVOR.]

OLIVER [*Calling her back*]. Ted—I'm awfully unhappy about you.

TEDDY. Why, Ollie?

OLIVER. You're just fooling yourself thinking you

can go on like this. What on earth have you got to look forward to? What are you going to do when it settles down to beastly monotony?

TEDDY. Why, I never was so happy in my life.

OLIVER. But the future, Ted. Have you thought of it?

TEDDY. No—the present's more than I can take care of.

OLIVER. I could make you awfully happy.

TEDDY. Oh, Ollie. You say it so well—but you've said it so often.

OLIVER. I love you. I'd be so good to you.

TEDDY. Don't Oliver—please. I used to adore having people propose to me. But I've had enough of that to last me the rest of my life. [BILLY *enters from the house. He and* OLIVER *look at each other tensely.* OLIVER *goes out slowly at R.*] Billy, I've been thinking. I want money now more than I ever did in my life.

BILLY. What?

TEDDY. I want it for you. Dad's got an awful lot. —Now is when you ought to have it so you can go on with your dreams and schemes.

BILLY. My schemes can take care of themselves.

TEDDY. No, they can't. And do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to Dad, and tell him my pride's all gone. I'm going to tell him how wonderful you are.

BILLY. You'll do nothing of the sort.

TEDDY. He'll be so proud of you. So glad to have me marry anybody so splendid. I'm going to him tomorrow.

BILLY. Not to tell him anything about me.

TEDDY. Of course I will.

BILLY. They think I want your money. They couldn't think anything else.

TEDDY. Who does? No, they don't. Why shouldn't you want it? It's mine. It will be yours.

BILLY. It won't.

TEDDY. I want you to have what everybody else has. I want you to have all that Oliver has. I want everybody to respect you and feel your power.

BILLY. You want it yourself—you mean.

TEDDY. But for you.

BILLY. Of course you're tired of this. Why shouldn't you be? It's pretty dull—and pretty grubby.

TEDDY. Billy, don't be nasty.

BILLY. I've been up in the clouds all right. I don't blame you a bit, Ted. It couldn't have turned out any other way.

TEDDY. What are you talking about?

BILLY. I was even stupid enough to actually think perhaps you'd be willing to give up the whole blooming business—after a while. I'm awfully glad you've said this now. Of course, you want your money. Why shouldn't you? Don't think I'm hanging around your feet. You're just as free as the first minute I saw you. Nothing that's happened out here is going to keep you from what you want—not for a second.

TEDDY. From what I *want?*

BILLY. You want everything you've given up, don't you?

TEDDY. Yes. Why not? What's wrong with that?

BILLY. I was a bloomin' idiot to think I meant any more to you than any of the others.

TEDDY. Than any of the others? Do you think I've ever—anybody has ever meant what you do to me?

BILLY. I was a novelty, I suppose. Something different that happened along at a convenient time.

TEDDY. Billy! I hate you!

BILLY. Isn't it true?

TEDDY. Are you saying this because of Oliver?

BILLY. He's only one of a good many, isn't he?

TEDDY. Oh!

BILLY. They've always been throwing it into me that I was only something new—and I wouldn't believe it. But what you've just said to me now—yourself—has opened my eyes. Fool? I should say I have been.

TEDDY. Somebody's kindly told you how many times I'm supposed to have been in love. I've done a very great many things which were pretty silly and which you would hate if you knew. I didn't think it was necessary to review my whole life to you. I certainly didn't expect you to do that for me. But I thought you did understand the new part of me—and that nothing on earth could shake your faith in me—or make you doubt what I've given to you.

BILLY. You'll want the old excitement so much you can't live without it.

TEDDY. Are you asking me to give up everything —*all my friends, forever?*

BILLY. I'm not asking you to give up *anything.*

TEDDY. I—can't make myself over—entirely. I can't change all my old habits and feelings and point of view. I can't. I'm just like my friends. I'm one

of them. After all, how can you expect me to change? [*Taking up a cigarette, and throwing it down.*]

BILLY. My God, I'm not asking you to change. I love you—but I know now I can't take the place of all you've had. And you want it, Ted. You want it.

TEDDY. Of course I do—and I want it for *you*. Why shouldn't you come into my world and be somebody in it?

BILLY. Because I despise it. But I want you to be happy, Ted—and to have what you want—and what you think is worth while in the whole game. And I'm going to clear out so you'll get it quick. [*He goes into the house.* TEDDY *stands alone a moment.*]

MARGARET [*Coming in from the R.*] Has your father— Has anything happened, Teddy?

TEDDY [*Goes slowly to* MARGARET *who puts her arms about her*]. Billy says he won't have my money and he won't marry me.

MARGARET. How much do you love him?

TEDDY. More than I ever thought anybody could love anything.

MARGARET [*A very happy and knowing look coming into her face*]. Billy's a big person. It would take a big person to hold him and to live up to his ideals.

TEDDY [*Moving back in amazement*]. Don't you think I could?

MARGARET. You're just a little spoiled girl, dear, who's had her own way all her life, and expected every man she took the trouble to flirt with to be her slave. Billy isn't anybody's slave, you know. If you've burned your fingers on him I'm sorry. Has he found you out? Is it all over?

TEDDY. It certainly is so far as I'm concerned. If he's so darn big, I don't want him stooping to me. I may be very small potatoes to some people, but there are people who think I'm rather worth while. If you and Billy are living on such a lofty plane that you can't commune with me I think I'll clear out and go where—— [*She sees* HUBERT *who comes from left along the road and down the steps.*] Oh, Daddy—Daddy, dear. [*After a moment she goes to him with a sob, putting her arms about his neck.* MARGARET *turns away to hide her own tears.*]

HUBERT [*Scarcely able to speak*]. There's never been a day or an hour that I haven't wanted you back.

TEDDY. There's never been a day or an hour when I haven't wanted you.

HUBERT. Why didn't you come, dear?

TEDDY. How could I? I've waited for you to come and tell me you trusted me.

HUBERT. My little girl! I'll make it up to you.

TEDDY [*Putting her arms about his neck again*]. Oh, Daddy, I'm glad you came. Take me home.

[MARGARET *turns to them again.*]

HUBERT. Margaret, she wants to go home.

TEDDY. Do you want me?

HUBERT. TED! [*Taking her in his arms.*] We'll shut up the house and leave it. Let's get off.

TEDDY. Oh—not just this minute.

HUBERT. Well—why not? I hate the place. I'm going to sell it. I want all association with it wiped out.

TEDDY. It's mine, Daddy. You can't do that.

HUBERT. Why can't I?

TEDDY. I love it. I've been more happy here than I ever——

HUBERT. Tut! I'm going to make you happier than you ever have been in your whole life.

TEDDY. How?

HUBERT. By giving you everything you want.

TEDDY. I'm afraid you can't do that.

HUBERT. What? What is there you want that I can't give you?

[TEDDY *moves away.* HUBERT *looks at* MARGARET.]

MARGARET [*Coming forward*]. Teddy's had a great disappointment.

TEDDY. Oh, don't tell father that.

HUBERT. Now don't keep things from me.

MARGARET. He'll have to know, dear. Everybody will know it.

HUBERT. What?

MARGARET. Billy Wade—who has been so splendid this summer—well—Teddy and he—thought they were in love with each other.

TEDDY. Oh, I'll tell it. He—he—Billy and I—We —He—That's all there is to it.

MARGARET. I think you'd better get her away at once. Billy's changed his mind. He doesn't want to marry her.

HUBERT [*Not believing his ears*]. What do you say?

TEDDY. Pretty hard for you to get that—isn't it, Dad?

HUBERT. He must be insane. But it's a blessing of course—the best possible way out of any complication you may have got yourself into. What do you

want to do, Ted? And we'll do it. Go round the world?

TEDDY [*Sitting on the bench*]. No, thank you.

HUBERT. Go to London to live?

TEDDY. No, thank you.

HUBERT. What do you suggest, Margaret? Build a house in town of our own?

TEDDY. *No!*

HUBERT. Want a yacht and cruise?

TEDDY. Oh, you always want to *buy* something, Dad.

HUBERT. Well, I don't know many things that can't be bought.

TEDDY. I know one—and it's the only thing I want.

HUBERT. Now see here, Teddy, if you want this fellow—I'll buy *him* for you.

TEDDY. I'd like to see you try. Why do you want to dispose of me? Let me do it myself. First of all, I want to be left alone—to think. Men aren't everything on earth. I don't want to leave my chickens. I love them.

HUBERT [*Frankly puzzled and helpless but doing the best he can*]. Well, you don't intend spending the rest of your life sitting here with the chickens, do you?

TEDDY. I may. I don't know at all. Regardless of you—or any other man in the world, I'm going to take care of myself.

MARGARET. You must expect her to feel this way, Hubert. As I told you she's had a great disappointment. Billy Wade is a very impressive person. You can't blame her for falling head over heels in love with him. If I were her age I'd do the same thing.

HUBERT. Well, let's have a look at the paragon. At least I'd like to pay him back for his work out here.

TEDDY. And I'd like to see you try *that.*

HUBERT. Get him. Get him. Where is he?

MARGARET. I'll see if he *will* see you. [*She goes into the house.*]

HUBERT. My dear child, I want to help you forget all this and make you happy.

TEDDY. That's what several people have said this afternoon. But I seem to have my own ideas of being happy. Do you want me to go back to the same things that made me the selfish, extravagant, absolutely useless thing that I was?

HUBERT. Don't put it on too thick, Ted. After all you were one of the most successful girls in New York.

TEDDY. Yes of course. All those things helped to make me a success—to say nothing of what you did for me. Don't think I don't want all you can do for me now. One side of me wants it awfully.

HUBERT. And you're going to have it.

TEDDY. But there's something in the world that you and I have never had at all. I've found out there are some things that are worth suffering for and some that——

MARGARET [*Coming out of the house with* BILLY]. Billy, this is Mr. Gloucester.

BILLY [*Coming forward*]. How do you do?

HUBERT [*After a steady look at* BILLY]. It seems my daughter is under very heavy obligations to you for what you've done here this summer. I'd like to

express my appreciation in a practical way. It will be quite possible to put you into something good in New York.

BILLY. Thank you. I don't care for it.

TEDDY. Um!

HUBERT. I understand you gave up something pretty fair once before in New York. What was that?

BILLY. I was with Alfred Tate.

HUBERT. Indeed! I've had a good many deals with Tate. And why did you give it up, may I ask?

BILLY. If you insist, because the business is crooked.

HUBERT. Um! And you gave it up to make a living on this scrubby little place instead?

BILLY. It's a pretty poverty-stricken living out here.

HUBERT. And yet you persuaded my daughter it was a good thing for her.

BILLY. And it was, wasn't it? Better than the other thing that was offered her just then?

HUBERT. And you've had the audacity to speak of marriage to her—and now you've decided you don't want her? Have you the faintest idea of the insufferable impertinence of that?

BILLY. Theodora has decided she wants her money and I can't marry her if she has it.

HUBERT. *What?!!!*

TEDDY [*Rising and going to* BILLY]. Billy—when you thought I didn't have any money you loved me, and I know you love me now. It's the money, Dad. He

won't take me with it, so I give it up—absolutely—everything you could possibly give me.

HUBERT. Steady, Ted. You're talking very big.

TEDDY. Billy, I'm just the way I was an hour ago—and I love you better than anything in the world. Will you marry me?

HUBERT. *My God!*

BILLY. Ted!

MARGARET. You ask him, too—Hubert. Do all you can to hold him.

HUBERT. Is there anything I could do—to induce you to accept me as a father-in-law?

TEDDY. You leave me alone with him a minute, Dad, and I'll see what I can do for you. [HUBERT *goes out at R. after* MARGARET.] Billy—will you marry me?

BILLY. Ted—I know you've flirted an awful lot but you're the only girl in my life—and if you're fooling me, I'll kill you.

TEDDY [*Putting her arms around his neck*]. Go on, dear—I love that!

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

39 EAST

A Comedy in Three Acts

THE CAST

AS FIRST PRESENTED AT THE BROADHURST THEATER, NEW YORK, MARCH 31ST 1919

Napoleon Gibbs	Henry Hull
Count Gionelli	Louis Alberni
Timothy O'Brien	Victor Sutherland
Washington	John Kirkpatrick
Dr. Hubbard	Albert Carroll
The Policeman	John Morris
Penelope Penn	Constance Binney
Madame de Mailly	Allison Skipworth
Miss MacMasters	Blanche Friderici
Mrs. Smith	Lucia Moore
Miss Sadie Clarence	Edithe Gresham
Miss Myrtle Clarence	Mildred Arden
Evalina	Jessie Graham
Rosa	Gertrude Clemens

ACT I

TIME: *A few years ago, a morning in spring.*

PLACE: *The long dining room of a dignified old house in New York, which has once been very elegant itself, surrounded by others of its kind, in a fashionable neighborhood. It has now lost its fashion, but steadfastly maintains its high ceilinged importance and grandeur, and, like some of its inmates, clings tenaciously and pitifully to the traditions of better days.*

MADAME DE MAILLY, *its present mistress, calls it a home for paying guests, and struggles, with all the weight of her imposing personality, to keep it from seeming what it is—a boarding house.*

There is a double door at center back showing the long flight of stairs in the hall beyond.

The single door at R., leading into the serving pantry, is half concealed by a tall and flamboyant screen.

Two long windows at L. are draped in the lace and velvet of the period to which the house belongs.

A very heavy and ornate sideboard is at L. back filled with elaborate silver, the inevitable coffee urn in the center.

One long table fills the center of the room, and two small ones, seating four persons, are in the two lower corners.

The tables are set for breakfast with good china and immaculate linen. Spring flowers are in abundance, and the general atmosphere is of very ugly and passée elegance, but of very generous and well ordered comfort.

As the curtain rises two neat colored maids are putting the finishing touches to the tables. They sing softly a popular song as they work—one carrying the air and the other crooning an alto accompaniment with variations and embellishments, their voices blending in the minor sweetness peculiar to their race.

EVALENA, *who is fat and forty, is cutting in half oranges which are in a platter on the sideboard, and putting a half at each place at the tables.*

ROSA *is distributing newspapers. She folds and places one on the back of several chairs.*

EVALENA [*After the song*]. Mrs. Smith always wants a whole or'nge.

ROSA. Well, she won't *git* it.

EVALENA. She says it ain't refined to put half a or'nge at ever'body's place. She says it's like a orphan asylum.

ROSA. Nothin' ain't refined enough fo' Mrs. Smith.

EVALENA. She says the atmosphere at 39 East ain't as refined as when she first come.

ROSA. I bet she don't nevah say nothin' to de Missus 'bout *atmosphere.*

EVALENA [*Chuckling*]. You bet she don't. The missus'd tell her she was gittin' all de atmosphere she was *payin'* fo'.

[*They both laugh with gurgling enjoyment.*]

ROSA. De Count's late dis mornin'. It's haf pas' eight, an' ef 'is eggs is cold he'll throw a fit.

EVALENA. Count! He ain't no count. What's he livin' in a bo'din' house fo' if he is? [*A cough is heard from the hall.* EVALENA *hurries behind the screen and calls.*] Washington—Count Gionelli's comin'.

ROSA [*Drawing out the* COUNT's *chair at the upper R. end of the long table*]. Fo' de Lord's sake, take that dust rag away!

[EVALENA *snatches the dust cloth from the back of a chair and holds it behind her, waiting at C. They both stand rigidly as* COUNT GIONELLI *comes down the stairs and into the room. He sits and devours his orange.*

After a moment WASHINGTON, *the fat negro butler, comes in from the pantry, holding a tray high on one hand.* ROSA *removes the orange plate and goes out, as* WASHINGTON *goes to L. of the* COUNT, *serving him with coffee, rolls and three eggs which the* COUNT *breaks noisily into a cup. The* COUNT *is a sad-eyed Italian, about thirty-five years old, carefully and elaborately dressed in slightly shabby clothes, with a general air of romance and a touch of the artistic.*

TIMOTHY O'BRIEN *is heard whistling cheerfully from the top of the stairs and then is seen dashing down.* TIMOTHY *is a noisy good natured American, with red hair and a ruddy face and the checks in his gray clothes are rather pronounced. He speaks with a nasal twang and a very strong Western burr.*]

TIMOTHY [*Having hung his straw hat on the rack which can be seen in the hall, and coming into the*

room]. Good morning, Rosa. Good morning, Washington.

WASHINGTON [*Turning ceremoniously*]. Good mornin', sah.

TIMOTHY [*Sitting noisily at the L. end of the long table*]. How goes it, Count?

[*The* COUNT *nods his head.*]

TIMOTHY. What have you got for me this morning, Evalena? [*Eating his orange.*]

EVALENA [*Filling* TIMOTHY'S *glass with water, which he instantly empties and holds for more*]. There's eggs, chops and sausage this mornin' sah.

THE COUNT [*Sadly to* WASHINGTON—*with a slight Italian accent*]. You might bring me chops and sausage this morning. I will try to eat them.

WASHINGTON. Yes sah—yessah. [*He hurries out through the pantry.*]

TIMOTHY. I'll take a little sausage on the side myself—if there's any to *spare*. [*Rolling his eyes at the* COUNT.]

EVALENA [*Grinning*]. Yes sah.

[TIMOTHY *smiles broadly at* EVALENA *as she goes out, and takes a newspaper from the back of a chair across the table.*]

TIMOTHY. What do you think of our sausages, Count?

THE COUNT. Oh, I do not know. I do not know *what* I eat.

TIMOTHY. Oh, you don't say. Do you mean your appetite is not so strong as usual just now?

THE COUNT. *Food* is not to me so much. It is of other things that I am thinking.

TIMOTHY. Of blue Italian skies, eh?

THE COUNT. *Ah!* [*With a deep sigh and a very sad shrug of his shoulders.*]

TIMOTHY. You'll have to get over that. If you've come to hustle for your living, the sooner you cut out the soft stuff, the better. See? None of my fry—just a little tip on the side.

THE COUNT. How can I all the romance of my life forget and think always only of the money—your American money?

TIMOTHY. But you *want* a little of it, don't you?

THE COUNT. I must live.

[MISS MACMASTERS *comes down the stairs and into the room, sitting at C. of the lower side of the table, her severe back turned to the audience. She is a tall, angular woman of the New England type—about fifty. She wears an immaculate white shirt waist, a short walking skirt and heavy flat-heeled shoes. Her nose glasses are on a black ribbon about her neck. Her face is like her manner, sharp and cleancut. She speaks with the New England accent.*]

TIMOTHY. Good morning, Miss McMasters.

MISS MCMASTERS. Good morning. [*To the* COUNT *—raising her voice slightly.*] Good morning.

THE COUNT. Oh—ah—good morning, Madame.

[ROSA *enters and goes to stand at left of* MISS MACMASTERS.]

TIMOTHY. How are *you* this morning, Miss MacMasters? [*Smiling at her with unabashed cheerfulness.*]

MISS MACMASTERS. Do I look sick?

TIMOTHY. Well—you look about as usual to me.

Miss MacMasters. Bring my coffee right away, Rosa, and have the rolls *hot*, not warm—and one egg, and not as hard as a rock the way it was yesterday. Do you understand?

Rosa. Yas'm! [*Starting to go.*]

Miss MacMasters. And Rosa! [Rosa *stops and turns*]. For the last time I do *not* eat fruit! [Rosa *removes the orange from the table.*] And don't forget my doughnut!

Rosa. No'm! [Rosa *goes out.*]

Miss MacMasters. I believe that's my paper you're reading, Mr. O'Brien! [Timothy *doesn't hear her.* [*She speaks more firmly.*] Mr. O'Brien, I believe that's my paper you are reading!

Timothy. Yes, I believe it is. Would you like it? Thank you very much. That's a very good paper—the *Times.*

Miss MacMasters. Why don't you take it if you like it so much?

Timothy. I do. I take yours every morning. [Timothy *laughs uproariously at his own joke.*]

Mme. de Mailly [*Entering from the L. through the hall*]. Good morning. Good morning. Good morning.

[Mme. de Mailly, *mistress of the house, is a large florid woman with slightly gray hair, worn in an elaborate coiffure. Her gown is black and modish, with quite an air of elegance. She speaks in a compelling voice, with a gasp and a shortness of breath which suggest tight lacing. Her manner is that of a very grand and rather condescending hostess.*]

Timothy. Good morning, Mme. de Mailly.

THE OTHERS. Good morning. [*She sweeps around the table and sits at the R. end of it.* WASHINGTON *enters with the sausage and chops, which he serves to the* COUNT *and to* TIMOTHY.]

MME. DE MAILLY [*Having greeted all her paying guests*]. Washington, bring my coffee. I'm rather in a hurry this morning. I'm going to a musicale. I'm going to hear some Italian music, Count. Don't you wish you were going?

[WASHINGTON, *after filling* MME. DE MAILLY'S *glass, goes out.*]

THE COUNT. I cannot say. I have very little good Italian music heard in this country.

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh, it's sure to be good. A *friend* of mine is giving it. *Good* morning, Dr. Hubbard.

DR. HUBBARD [*Having come down the stairs and into the room*]. Good morning.

[DR. HUBBARD *is a very neat young man, with hair parted in the middle, who makes a great effort to live up to his professional dignity.*]

THE OTHERS. Good morning.

[DR. HUBBARD *sits on the upper side of the table, leaving one seat vacant between himself and the* COUNT.]

TIMOTHY. Good morning, Doc!

MME. DE MAILLY. I almost sent for you last night, Dr. Hubbard.

DR. HUBBARD. Indeed?

MME. DE MAILLY. Yes. I was afraid I was going to be awfully ill. I went to the theatre with some friends and they insisted upon going to Sherry's after-

wards—just for a bite—they said. They *would* insist upon lobster because they know I'm so awfully fond of it, and I *couldn't* refuse. I can't bear to throw cold water on a party.

TIMOTHY. Better to throw cold water than to throw the lobster. [*The others are horrified.* TIMOTHY *laughs with boisterous abandon.*]

MRS. SMITH [*As she flutters in*]. Good morning. Good morning, everybody.

THE OTHERS. Good morning.

[WASHINGTON *enters and serves* MME. DE MAILLY.]

MME. DE MAILLY. Good morning, my dear.

TIMOTHY. Good morning. Have you used Pear's soap?

MRS. SMITH [*Raising her eyebrows and snubbing* TIMOTHY]. Oh *you!* Only my toast and coffee, Washington.

DOCTOR [*To* WASHINGTON]. A cup of hot water, and my usual shredded wheat.

[MRS. SMITH *is a small woman about fifty-five who wears her very blonde hair in a great many curls and puffs and whose general fluffiness is enhanced by her coquettish manner and by her rings, bracelets and chains.*

DR. HUBBARD *hastens to rise and draw back* MRS. SMITH'S *chair, which is between his and that of the* COUNT.]

MRS. SMITH [*In her soft purring voice as she flutters and twinkles, refusing to realize she is no longer a young and beautiful Southern belle*]. Oh, *thank* you, Dr Hubbard. It's *so* nice to have that done. It's so much like home. Somehow I don't seem to be able to

forget all those little things—but of course I ought not to *expect* them outside of my own home.

MME. DE M. [*Her pride visibly wounded*]. I'm sure I try to make my house as homelike as possible!

[ROSA *enters to serve* MISS MACMASTERS.]

MRS. SMITH. Oh dear me, of course I know you do. But it's so hard for me to get dressed in the morning —all alone. Hooks and things, you know. Would you mind, Doctor Hubbard? Just fasten this one for me, please, I do need my maid so.

MISS MACMASTERS. I should say so, what you need is a nurse. [*Putting down her cup with a click.*]

DOCTOR HUBBARD. This isn't exactly in my line. [*As he struggles with the cuff button for* MRS. SMITH'S *sleeve.*]

MRS. SMITH. Oh—am I expecting too much of you, Doctor? [*Moving closer to him.*]

MISS MACMASTERS. If he's of age I should think it's high time he knows a hook and eye when he sees one.

TIMOTHY [*Laughing until he is in great danger of choking*]. Keep on, Doc. Don't give up.

MRS. SMITH. Oh dear! I've lost one of my slippers. They're so much too big, you know, I can't keep them on.

TIMOTHY. I never saw a woman in my life whose shoes weren't too big for her.

COUNT. Where? Where have you lost your little slipper?

TIMOTHY. Slipper—slipper—who's got the slipper!

[TIMOTHY *and the* COUNT *both get under the table to look for the slipper.*]

LIBRARY

Miss MacMasters. That's *my* foot thank you—and I have both my shoes on. [*As* Timothy *grasps her foot.*]

Count. Ah! I have found it! [*He holds up the slipper.*] It is so very small.

Mme. de Mailly [*With withering dignity*]. Yes—but it belongs *under* the table.

[*The* Count *puts the slipper on* Mrs. Smith's *foot with much giggling and gurgling from that lady.*]

Mrs. Smith. Oh thank you *so* much, Count. Pardon me, Mme. De Mailly. I'm sorry to make so much trouble. I'm afraid I was never meant to live any place but in my own home.

Mme. de Mailly. It was a great sorrow to *me* to give up *my own* home, too.

Mrs. Smith. Oh, of course—I know.

Miss MacMasters. Yes, I think we've *all* had homes once. I can assure you *I'm* not here because I *want* to be.

Mrs. Smith [*Beaming at the* Count]. I suppose *your* home was a castle, Count.

Count [*With his mouth full—lifting his eyes and holding his knife and fork upright*]. Ah—you must excuse me. I can not speak of it without much pain.

Mrs. Smith. Oh, forgive me.

Timothy. Yes, it gives me a pain to think of *my* home, too.

Mme. de Mailly. Just where *was* your home, Mr. O'Brien?

Timothy. Blue Creek, Kansas.

Mme. de Mailly. Oh!

TIMOTHY. I expected that!

MRS. SMITH. That Miss Penn is from the West, too, isn't she?

TIMOTHY. You bet she is!

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh do you think so? She seems very ladylike.

TIMOTHY. She's a lady all right, all right. But she's got the pluck and grit of a Western girl.

MRS. SMITH. Dear me! Has she confided in *you?*

TIMOTHY. She don't need to. I know the article when I see it.

MRS. SMITH. She's so *very* mysterious, isn't she?

MME. DE MAILLY. Not at all. There's nothing mysterious in *my house.* Miss Penn is a young girl, here alone—studying music. Why not? Why not? She's in my care.

MISS MACMASTERS. Well, what do you know about her—beyond the fact that she's here alone and *says* she's studying music?

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh I know quite enough. I'm a very good judge of human nature. I have an instinct for judging people, doctor. It interests me very much. I'm sure it does you, too. You must study nature very closely all the time.

DOCTOR HUBBARD. Oh yes—yes. But not from your standpoint. A physician is always analyzing and dissecting and probing very deeply into the mysteries of the human body—and——

MISS MACMASTERS. But you don't need to discuss it at breakfast, do you?

DOCTOR HUBBARD. And into the *mind* and *soul,* I was about to say.

Mme. de Mailly. Yes—yes—of course. I understand.

Doctor Hubbard. It is now the most advanced side of medicine—the absolute understanding of the human soul.

Mrs. Smith. Gracious! Do you really understand all of us, Doctor? Do you actually think you understand *me?*

Doctor Hubbard. Well—I——

Miss MacMasters. I don't think you need to probe so very deeply to do that.

Mme. de Mailly. Count Gionelli, it interests me very much to have so many different types in my house. I'm a great student of human nature and it would be very dull to me to have everybody just alike. Have you noticed what a distinct variety of guests I have?

The Count. Guests?

Miss MacMasters. Boarders she means.

The Count. I—cannot say. They——

Timothy. All boarders look alike to him. They would to me too, so long as they paid their bills.

Mme. de Mailly. My dear Mr. O'Brien, you don't understand. The Count will understand what I mean. The dramatic side interests me, not the commercial. To see each different personality enter, you know, is——

Timothy [*Looking up as the twins come down the stairs*]. And how do you like it when you see double?

[*The* Misses Clarence *enter the room side by side. They are drab, gentle, timid creatures, looking exactly alike and dressed exactly alike as to the minutest detail—one color scheme in blue and the other in gray*

—showing a dove-like desire to be attractively though modestly attired. They walk with their eyes downcast, speaking to no one and go to the small table at R. The other guests stop talking and watch them as they sit.]

MME. DE MAILLY [*With elaborate kindness, after a pause*]. Good morning, my dears.

SADIE AND MYRTLE. Good morning. [*Speaking together.*]

MME. DE MAILLY. Evalena, take the young ladies' order.

[EVALENA, *who has been filling glasses, passing bread, etc., since she served* TIMOTHY, *now goes to stand at L. of* SADIE.]

SADIE [*In a very sweet voice with over-careful enunciation*]. What are you going to have this morning, Myrtle?

MYRTLE [*With an exact reproduction of* SADIE'S *voice*]. What are you going to have, Sadie?

SADIE. I thought I'd have a dropped egg on toast this morning.

MYRTLE. I thought I would, too.

SADIE [*To* EVALENA, *with a nod and smile*]. A dropped egg, please.

MYRTLE [*With the same nod and smile*]. A dropped egg, please!

[EVALENA *goes out.*]

[*There is a murmur of conversation from the large table as the others go on with their breakfast.*]

SADIE [*Opening her newspaper*]. Won't you look at the paper first this morning, Myrtle?

MYRTLE. No, you look at it first, Sadie.

SADIE. We'll look at it together. [*They put their heads together, each holding the paper. The others laugh and begin to talk without trying to hide their amusement.*]

MME. DE MAILLY [*Trying to make herself heard*]. To go back to what I was saying— To go back to what I was saying. I say, to go back to what I was saying— Nothing could be more exclusive than my house. I'm *very* particular. I *refuse* a great *many* people. Of course, we can't *all* have titles! [*Smiling at the* COUNT.]

MRS. SMITH. I suppose it seems very strange to you, Count, not to hear any titles over here. We have *no* titles in America, you know.

COUNT. So?

MRS. SMITH. We don't go in for names at all. Do we, Doctor?

DR. HUBBARD. We're far too democratic for that. That is one of our most striking characteristics—our total disregard of title and name. Our utter lack of false pride.

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh, I wouldn't say that exactly. I'm very proud of my name. Of course I am an American, but my mother was English and my father was French. It's *de Mailly*—in good French. [*Pronouncing it elaborately.*] But of course nobody ever says it. You all pronounce it differently—everyone of you in this house. Now *you* say it very well, doctor, *very* well indeed.

DR. HUBBARD [*Trying not to be too much overcome*]. Thank you. I presume my medical education

enables me to pronounce difficult words correctly. We have a great many medical terms from the Latin, you know.

MME. DE MAILLY. Yes, so I've heard. How hard you must have worked.

DR. HUBBARD. I'm very proud of *my* title, Count, because I didn't inherit it. I won it by hard labor.

THE COUNT. Ah—so? You have a title?

DR. HUBBARD. My professional title.

TIMOTHY. Doctor—Count—doctor. "Doc—" for short.

THE COUNT. Ah?

MRS. SMITH. My *maiden* name was Carrington—an old Southern name, Count. You know the old Southern names are the oldest ones we have.

THE COUNT. Maiden? Ah—dat I do not understand.

TIMOTHY. Her maiden name—before she was married you know.

THE COUNT. Ah! And w'at is de name now, please?

MRS. SMITH. Oh—Smith. George Leonard Smith.

THE COUNT. Ah, so—I have heard that name vera much in this country.

MISS MACMASTERS. Yes, *it's* one of the oldest we have too.

THE COUNT. That is very interesting. And w'at was your name, please, may I say? [*Addressing* MISS MACMASTERS.] De—wat you call it—De——

TIMOTHY. Maiden name. *Maiden* name.

[MRS. SMITH *titters.*]

Miss MacMasters. My maiden name *was* and is—and always *will* be—*MacMasters*. A good plain American name.

Mme. de Mailly. Oh, Scotch. MacMasters is very Scotch.

Miss MacMasters. It may have been in my grandfather's time—but that doesn't interest me. I'm American to the backbone.

Timothy. You bet. My grandfather was an Irishman but I'm an American all right—all right.

The Count [*Rising*]. Ah you American peoples! You have been so many things. In Italy we are all Italians. I must say au revoir. A revederci.

Mme. de Mailly. Good morning, Count! [*Delighted with her foreign guest.*]

Mrs. Smith. Oh, *good* morning, Count. [*They watch him as he bows himself out.*] It must be a great trial to the Count to have to go down to business every morning!

Miss MacMasters. You mean it's great luck for him to have any business to go to.

Mrs. Smith [*Tossing her head*]. Oh, you and I don't have the same ideas about those things, Miss MacMasters.

Miss MacMasters. No, thank goodness, we don't!

Mme. de Mailly. Well, I always see both sides of everything. I'm very democratic and very aristocratic.

Miss MacMasters. Yes—*that's* necessary in your business, too.

Dr. Hubbard [*Rising*]. Well, ladies—I'm sorry but my professional duties call me away.

Mrs. Smith. Poor man!

Dr. Hubbard. It would be much pleasanter to sit here idling with the ladies—but we can't live only for pleasure. I have a hard day's work before me. Good morning.

Mme. de Mailly. Bye bye—doctor. Good bye.

[*He makes his exit as importantly as possible.*]

Mrs. Smith. Isn't he a love!

Mme. de Mailly. A very promising young physician.

Miss MacMasters. He's a young idiot!

Timothy [*Laughing and rising*]. It takes nerve to leave you ladies. Any little things you're getting ready to shoot at me you can let fly now as I'm off. Me for the sub.— [*Smiling broadly at them all, he strides out. Taking his hat from the rack he waves it to the ladies and with a final chuckle is gone.*]

Mrs. Smith. He *is* vulgar—but I must say I rather like him.

Mme. de Mailly. I haven't any one in my house anybody could dislike.

Mrs. Smith. Not *many* of course, Mrs. de Mailly, but I watched again last night and that Miss Penn went out and didn't come in till twelve o'clock. That's *three* times. For the last *three* nights she's been out till *twelve* o'clock.

Mme. de Mailly. How do you know?

Mrs. Smith. I left my door open just a little and I saw her with my own eyes.

Miss MacMasters. What don't you ask her point blank where she goes and *what* she does?

Mme. de Mailly. I shall do so—in my own way.

Miss MacMasters. That man Gibbs will never marry her.

Mrs. Smith. Never!

Miss MacMasters. Never in the world! Mark my words, it behooves you to know what is going on in this house.

Mme. de Mailly. Oh, tut tut! I can take care of my own house. I trust Mr. Gibbs absolutely. He's a very nice young man.

Miss MacMasters. Of course the *man's* all right.

Mrs. Smith. Of course. We're not sayin' a thing about *Mr. Gibbs.*

Mme. de Mailly. I should hope not. I should regret to think that a Gibbs of Baltimore could be criticized in my house. I confess I am rather flattered to *have* him here. His mother preferred the quiet exclusiveness of my house to an hotel, and now that she's gone he's staying on because he finds it so attractive. They're very wealthy and distinguished people and I hope he'll stay—indefinitely.

Miss MacMasters. He *will*—as long as you let him carry on with that girl.

Mme. de Mailly. Oh nonsense—nonsense! He's human. Of course he'd notice her. But a *Gibbs* of Baltimore! You don't seem to realize *who* he is.

Miss MacMaster. I realize that the more money he has—and the more of a somebody he is—the more queer it is that he stays here in this house.

Mme. de Mailly. I beg your pardon! Oh—Good morning, Mr. Gibbs. How are you this morning? [*As* Napoleon *comes down the stairs and into the room.*]

NAPOLEON. How are you? [*He is young, good looking and completely indifferent to his surroundings.*]

SADIE [*In low tones to her sister*]. Pinch your cheeks, Myrtle dear. You're a little pale!

[*The women watch* NAPOLEON *as he sits at the small table at L. and opens his paper. Sadie, smiling, starts to bow several times before he sees her.*]

NAPOLEON [*Noticing her at last*]. Good morning!

SADIE. Good morning. There's Mr. Gibbs, sister!

MYRTLE. Oh, excuse me, Mr. Gibbs. Good morning.

NAPOLEON. Oh, good morning. [EVALENA *coming in from the pantry goes to the L. of* NAPOLEON.] Good morning!

EVALENA. Good morning!

NAPOLEON. Bring me an egg, please.

MISS MACMASTERS [*Rising with decision*]. Well——

MRS. SMITH. Are you going out to-day?

MISS MACMASTERS. I certainly don't intend to sit in the house all day.

MRS. SMITH. You're so energetic. It's so hard for me to get up early and get down to breakfast.

MISS MACMASTERS. I'm not ashamed of getting up early. I don't think people who have to live in boarding houses can put on airs very successfully.

[*As* MISS MACMASTERS *turns to go,* PENELOPE PENN *enters. She is a fresh, pretty girl of twenty—simply and becomingly dressed. Her manner has a certain bright confident energy.* MISS MACMASTERS *stares at her without bowing.*]

PENELOPE. You dropped your handkerchief, I

think. [*Stooping to pick up a handkerchief and holding it out to* MISS MACMASTERS.]

MISS MACMASTERS. That doesn't belong to me. I never drop anything. [*She strides out and up the stairs.*]

PENELOPE [*Looking at* MME. DE MAILLY]. Perhaps it's——

MRS. SMITH. Oh dear, it's *mine*, I *know*. I'm so careless. I don't *mean* to be. But it's so hard for me to take care of my own things. I'm not used to it. Thank you, I'm sure. [*As* PENELOPE *gives her the handkerchief.*]

MME. DE MAILLY. Good morning, Miss Penn.

PENELOPE. Good morning. [*She goes to sit at L. of table where the twins are.* NAPOLEON *watches her, pretending to read his paper.*] Good morning. Good morning. [*Nodding and smiling at the twins.*]

SADIE *and* MYRTLE [*Cautiously*]. Good morning!

PENELOPE. It's a perfectly beautiful day, isn't it?

SADIE. Yes it is.

MYRTLE. Yes it is.

PENELOPE. Don't you *love* Spring? It's beautiful at home now, I know. The trees in the yard are all coming out. There's the dearest old apple tree by the side porch that always comes out first, and when it begins to blossom—Um!! It's the *sweetest* thing in the world. Isn't it? [*She looks at them for sympathy. They lower their eyes.*] Haven't you ever seen an apple tree when it just *first* comes into blossom?

SADIE. We're New Yorkers.

[EVALENA *comes back with* NAPOLEON's *breakfast.*]

MYRTLE. We're always in New York in the spring.

PENELOPE. Oh, that's too bad!

SADIE. Oh, we wouldn't be any place else in Spring for the world.

MYRTLE. Oh no indeed!

SADIE. When mamma was living we always went away in July.

MYRTLE. Oh yes!

SADIE. But now we don't go till August.

MYRTLE. Oh no!

SADIE. We used to go to the seashore but now we go to Chautauqua.

[*As* EVALENA *serves* NAPOLEON *he tears off a scrap of the margin of his newspaper, writes something on it, and folds it.*]

NAPOLEON [*Slipping the piece of paper into* EVALENA'S *hand and indicating that she is to give it to* PENELOPE]. Be careful!

[EVALENA *goes to stand beside* PENELOPE.]

EVALENA. Did you drop this, Miss?

PENELOPE. Oh, thank you! Coffee, rolls and an egg please. Wouldn't it be nice if there was something new for breakfast? [EVALENA *goes out.* PENELOPE, *not daring to open the note, talks rapidly to the twins.*] Something we'd never heard of in all our lives—and we couldn't guess—and it was a surprise every morning. Wouldn't it be fun?

MYRTLE. Oh—I don't believe that would be very good for us.

SADIE. No—too great a variety in food—especially for breakfast is very bad for one.

PENELOPE. Oh—is it? But it's fun to play it anyway. At the top of the stairs I always say—I wonder

what it's going to be. And by the time I've got to the bottom it's something so wonderful that I really believe it.

MYRTLE. I don't seem to quite follow you. Perhaps sister Sadie does. She's much quicker than I am. Do you follow, sister?

SADIE. No, I don't. You're wrong. I'm not quicker than you are. Mamma always said she really thought you had the keener intellect.

MYRTLE. Oh no. Oh no. [*To* PENELOPE.] Now just what was it you said?

PENELOPE [*Who has just tried to read the note—opening it under the table*]. Um? Oh—I—don't remember. Nothing. Isn't that a cunning little flower in the table cloth! Oh dear! It's done by machine. [*In a whisper, lifting the hem of the tablecloth.*] But I suppose nobody has time to hem by hand in New York. I love to do it. [*She looks away with a sigh.*]

MYRTLE. I wouldn't have thought you could do hand sewing. [PENELOPE *lost in troubled thought doesn't hear.*] I say I wouldn't have thought you could do hand sewing!

PENELOPE [*Rousing herself*]. Oh yes, mother and I make all my own dresses and all my own hats.

MME. DE MAILLY [*Rising majestically*]. Well, I must hurry on or I'll be late for my musicale.

MRS. SMITH. I'm going to one next week. A *very* smart one. This friend of mine gives such lovely things. She lives *just* off Fifth Avenue, you know, and she always wants me there. It's *so* sweet of her—but really, you know, since I've given up my home and

can't return all these things I almost think sometimes I'll give up going.

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh no, I don't feel that way about it at all. I always accept everything. [*Going to* NAPOLEON *and bending over him a little.*] Don't forget to come into the drawing room this evening, Mr. Gibbs. You know we always have a little music on my Saturday evenings.

NAPOLEON. Oh, thank you very much. I'm afraid I——

MME. DE MAILLY. Now don't say no. You don't know how nice my evenings are. I like a social spirit in my house, you know. [*Going to the hall door and turning to speak to the twins.*] And you know what I expect of *you* young ladies.

SADIE. We're practicing very hard, but I—I don't think we'll do ourselves justice this evening.

MYRTLE. No, I don't think we will.

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh, yes you will. Miss Penn, if you'll come to my room when you've finished your breakfast I'd like to speak to you a moment.

PENELOPE. Oh—Yes—Yes, I will, Mme. de Mailly.

[MME. DE MAILLY *sails out through the hall and to the right.*]

MRS. SMITH [*Attracting as much attention as possible as she rises*]. Oh Mr. Gibbs, I've finished the book I was telling you about. I'll send it down to you if you'd like to read it.

NAPOLEON. Thank you very much—but don't trouble. I'm not much of a reader.

MRS. SMITH. Oh, no trouble at all. I'll just send it down to you. Somehow I really believe you would

enjoy it. Because it takes a really clever alert up-to-date mind *to* enjoy it. [*She flutters out and up the stairs.* NAPOLEON *watches* PENELOPE *till she raises her eyes, when he winks feelingly—and* PENELOPE *almost laughing aloud, quickly lowers her eyes again.*]

SADIE. Was your egg nice, Myrtle?

MYRTLE. Yes, very nice. Was yours?

SADIE. Yes, very nice. I think they give us very nice eggs here.

MYRTLE. Yes, so do I.

SADIE. Don't you, Mr. Gibbs?

NAPOLEON. Huh?

SADIE. Eggs, very nice eggs.

NAPOLEON. Yes, I usually have pretty good luck.

SADIE. I hope you don't expect too much of us this evening, Mr. Gibbs!

NAPOLEON. Huh?

MYRTLE. In our music.

NAPOLEON. Oh!—No, I don't expect much.

MYRTLE. Of course sister plays beautifully—but I don't do much. Mamma always said she was the real musician.

SADIE [*Rising*]. Oh, Myrtle, how you chatter! Mr. Gibbs doesn't believe that, I know. Come now—dear—we must get right at our practicing, if we are really going to play for friends this evening.

MYRTLE [*Nervously as she rises and starts to the door.*] Oh dear, I almost wish you weren't coming to hear us play this evening, Mr. Gibbs.

NAPOLEON. I'm not. I mean—I have a *very* pressing engagement.

MYRTLE. Oh.

SADIE. Men are such busy creatures. Come, sister. I'll go and get our music out. [*She goes up the stairs.*]

MYRTLE [*Turning back at the door to speak to* NAPOLEON]. My sister's so modest—but she really might have made a great musician if she hadn't been so—so——

NAPOLEON. So conscientious.

MYRTLE. Y-es—perhaps that's it. [*With a little wistful sigh she goes slowly up the stairs.*]

NAPOLEON [*Taking his coffee to* PENELOPE'S *table*]. Thought they'd never get out. I'll finish my coffee over here, if you don't mind. Why didn't you answer my note?

PENELOPE. I couldn't. Everybody would have seen me.

NAPOLEON. Well, will you go?

PENELOPE. Oh, I couldn't!

NAPOLEON. You mean you don't want to.

PENELOPE. No—no, I don't mean that at all. Thank you very much—but really I—I couldn't. You're awfully good, but I couldn't.

NAPOLEON. Have you got an engagement tonight?

PENELOPE. N-o. Y-e-s—yes I have.

NAPOLEON. Well, then, how about tomorrow night—or any night you say?

PENELOPE. Oh really—I—can't. Thank you so much. You're very kind, but I—I——

NAPOLEON. I've never been turned down so many times by the same girl in my life. *Why* won't you go to a show with me? Don't you want to be seen with me? Don't you like my style?

PENELOPE. Oh, you know it isn't that at all.

NAPOLEON. Are you afraid these old tabbycats will talk?

[PENELOPE *laughs and stops suddenly as* EVALENA *comes back from the pantry.*]

NAPOLEON. Bring me another cup of coffee, Evalena.

EVALENA. Yas, sah. [*She takes the cup and goes out with a sympathetic and understanding grin.*]

NAPOLEON. You could meet me outside some place and no one would be on—if that's what you're afraid of.

PENELOPE. Meet you *outside?* Why—I wouldn't *do* such a thing. I don't like you for thinking I would.

NAPOLEON. I apologize. Forget it! I bet you're 'fraid of these old birds. How did you ever happen to get into this old ladies' home anyway?

PENELOPE. How did *you* happen to?

NAPOLEON. This is the last time Mother gets me here you bet. I expected to clear out when she went but here I am. Do you know why?

PENELOPE. No—why?

NAPOLEON. Guess!

PENELOPE. I couldn't. How could I?

NAPOLEON. You little liar! You know why I stayed and you know I *know* you know!

PENELOPE [*Laughing*]. I don't know what you're talking about.

NAPOLEON. A girl always knows when a fellow's gone on her.

PENELOPE. Oh——

NAPOLEON. I like you. I like you a lot.

PENELOPE. Oh——

NAPOLEON. Do you want me to get out? [*A pause.*] Do you?

PENELOPE. No.

NAPOLEON. Then why don't you go to a show with me?

PENELOPE. I—I'll tell you something. But you must promise not to tell.

NAPOLEON. Honest true—cross my heart.

PENELOPE. Never—to a soul.

NAPOLEON. Never—to a soul.

PENELOPE. Well—— [*They lean towards each other as* EVALENA *comes back with the coffee.*]

NAPOLEON. Thank you. Much obliged.

[EVALENA *puts the coffee on the table and goes out again.*]

NAPOLEON [*Pushing the coffee away and leaning over the table to* PENELOPE.] Well?

PENELOPE. Well—I—I can't go with you—because I—No, I don't think I'll tell you. I couldn't.

NAPOLEON. Oh come! That's not square. You promised you would tell—and *I* promised I *wouldn't*.

PENELOPE. Yes, but I've changed my mind. But I'll tell you what I *will* do. I'll tell you that I can't go with you not because I don't *want* to—but because of a very good, and very serious and very important reason that nobody knows anything about but *you*.

NAPOLEON. But me?

PENELOPE. But *you*—and you promised *not* to *tell*.

NAPOLEON. Tell *what?* What have you told me?

PENELOPE. Why I've told you that there *is* a

reason. That's the main thing. Nobody else knows *that,* but I know you'll keep my confidence.

NAPOLEON. Well, that's the most suspicious confidence I ever had handed out to me. Come on—tell a fellow. [*She shakes her head.*] Please. You're a funny girl. Why don't you let me give you a good time? Why do you poke around this dried up old place? Any girl who has the pluck to leave home to make her fortune the way you did, has got to give up all the old dope and go in for the new. What made you do it anyway? How did you have the nerve to?

PENELOPE. I wanted to *do* something. There's such an awfully big family of us—and father's salary isn't very large.

NAPOLEON. They ought to regulate the size of a minister's salary by the size of his family. Don't you think?

PENELOPE [*Laughing with sudden happiness and checking herself*]. I wish they would.

NAPOLEON. So you're going to make money for them all—Eh?

PENELOPE. Yes I *am.*

NAPOLEON. Tell me something—on the level. Can you really sing?

PENELOPE. Of course I can.

NAPOLEON. I don't mean *warble* a little. I mean can you get in the game with the rest of 'em? If you had the chance could you deliver the goods?

PENELOPE. *If* I had a chance! *If* I had a chance! Oh if I only *had!* I *know* I could do something. I *know* it! I feel it! People always cried when I sang in church—and I've given concerts that people said

were lots better than things they'd heard in cities. That's the way I made the money to come away with—by giving concerts.

NAPOLEON [*After a pause in which he looks at her with admiring wonder and amusement*]. Didn't you know a soul here when you came?

PENELOPE. No—not anybody—but father gave me a letter of introduction to a minister who was a classmate of his. I thought through him I could get a position in a church choir. That's what I really wanted to do.

NAPOLEON. But he didn't dope one out—um?

PENELOPE. No—he—he seemed to be awfully busy. Ministers here don't seem to be quite so kind—and interested in everybody as they are in the country.

NAPOLEON. No you *bet* they're not. They're out for themselves—in this town—like everybody else. I think you're damned plucky—but I also think you're up against it. I like you, little girl—I like you a lot. I hate to see you get your eyes open. I hate to see you disappointed and——

PENELOPE [*Rising*]. I'm not disappointed! It's not so easy as I *thought* it was going to be—but goodness, you have to have courage and strength to overcome hard places if you do *any*thing. Father says nothing worth while was ever accomplished without suffering and hard work. I wouldn't give up for anything in this world. Do you suppose I'd go home and have everybody say I'd failed? Not much!

NAPOLEON. All the other girls would say—"I told you so"—wouldn't they?

PENELOPE. Yes, they would—but then—that isn't

it. It's something much bigger than that—that makes me stay. We—we *must* have some money. Tom and Charlie must go to college and mother isn't very strong and she—— [*Her voice breaks and she turns her head away.*]

NAPOLEON [*After a pause—almost touching her hand—but stopping*]. How does it happen you didn't marry some Johnnie out there?

PENELOPE. I didn't *want* to.

NAPOLEON. I bet two or three wanted to marry *you.* Didn't they?

PENELOPE. Don't be silly.

NAPOLEON. You won't stick to this. You're the sort of a girl who ought to be home singing lullabies. You're not meant to bang around this town and see the rotten side of it. You ought to be taken care of, you know. I bet you've got two or three fellows up your sleeve. Now honest—on the level— *haven't* you?

PENELOPE [*Moving away from the table a little*]. Of *course* not. I'm not that kind of a girl.

NAPOLEON. Well, what kind of a *girl are* you? You've got me guessing.

PENELOPE. I'm just a plain ordinary everyday sort of a girl who wants to do something to help her family.

NAPOLEON. You were made to have a good time—a little fun you know. Look here—*I'm* all right. [*Rising and going to her.*] What's the matter with me? Why don't you like me?

PENELOPE. Why—I do!

NAPOLEON. No, you don't. If you did you'd——

MRS. SMITH [*Coming down the steps and into the room*]. Oh—oh—I beg pardon. Dear *me!* I thought

everybody was through breakfast. I just tripped down to put this book at your place, Mr. Gibbs—so I wouldn't forget it.

NAPOLEON [*Rising reluctantly*]. What book? Oh yes. Much obliged!

MRS. SMITH [*Not looking at* PENELOPE]. I'm sure you'll like it—because I really have a little way of knowing what young men *do* like. [*Laughing and shaking her finger at him.*] You're late, aren't you? Aren't you going to business *at all* today?

NAPOLEON. Yes—I thought maybe I would.

MRS. SMITH. Naughty boy! You oughtn't to let *anything* interfere with your business. Well, I must trip along. I have to run in and see Mme. de Mailly. In other words I have to pay my boa'd bill—but that's so sordid I hate to say it. I simply *can't* get used to paying a *boa'd* bill. It's simply *too awful.* But the moment I know it's due I simply *can't* wait till I've tripped down and *paid* it. [PENELOPE *looks utterly wretched at the mention of "board bill."*] But of course, I'm not *used* to paying my own bills.

NAPOLEON. If you were maybe you wouldn't be so keen about *paying* them.

MRS. SMITH. I hope you don't think I'd ever be *that* sort—not to pay my *boa'd bill.*

NAPOLEON. I hope for your *land*lady's sake you won't.

[PENELOPE *looks more and more frightened.*]

MRS. SMITH. You're so droll. Well—I mustn't stay talking to *you.* [*Dropping her purse.*] Oh, *dear!* Oh thank you *so* much! [*As* NAPOLEON *picks it up for her.*] I'm not used to taking care of my

own money, you see. Well—bye-by—I must run along. [*She trips out through the hall to R.*]

NAPOLEON [*Waving his hand*]. Bye-by. [*He turns to* PENELOPE *ready to laugh—but stops suddenly.*] What's the matter?

PENELOPE. Nothing. Nothing.

NAPOLEON. There is too. Something's hit you all in a heap.

PENELOPE. No—no really, I——

NAPOLEON. Look here, little girl—is anything troubling you?

PENELOPE. Why—no—of course not.

NAPOLEON. We never can talk here. Confound it! Come out now and walk down the avenue with me.

PENELOPE. I couldn't. Please don't ask me to. Don't, please.

NAPOLEON. Do you think I'm a freshy—butting in?

PENELOPE. No—no—of course I don't.

NAPOLEON. Do you wish I'd get out and never speak to you again?

PENELOPE. No—no—of course not.

NAPOLEON. Do you sort of like to have me—hanging around?

PENELOPE [*Shyly*]. I——

NAPOLEON. Yes or no.

PENELOPE. I think you're very kind.

NAPOLEON. Oh hell! Excuse me. But don't slap me in the face with that! Sit down. [*She sits meekly at the table again.*] Now—do you like me—or not? [*Sitting beside her.*]

PENELOPE. Of course.

NAPOLEON. Of course *which?*

PENELOPE. Of course I *like* you.

NAPOLEON. Much obliged. Then why in the name of heaven do you keep on freezing me out? *Why* won't you go to a show with me? *Why?*

PENELOPE. Because I—I—I—can't.

NAPOLEON. Gee! But you've got a strong character.

PENELOPE. Listen—I—I'm doing something. I—If you—Would you—Could you——

NAPOLEON. I *would* you and I *could* you do *anything* you ask me. Just go ahead and *ask* it—that's all I want. [*Bending over her.*]

PENELOPE [*Lowering her eyes and twisting her handkerchief.*] You might think it's funny but——

NAPOLEON [*With quick tenderness*]. It won't be funny. Go on—please.

PENELOPE. Then—if you—Perhaps after tomorrow I'll tell you something.

NAPOLEON. Is that all I get?

PENELOPE. I—you——

NAPOLEON. Why don't you tell me—now? *Please.* Why see here, little girl, I'm awfully interested. You know that. Don't you? Don't you? You're all alone. Why don't you talk to me? You haven't got anybody else. Come on. [*Putting his hand over hers.*] Please tell me. Won't you?

PENELOPE [*Looking up at him*]. You're awfully good. I almost think I will. I—I'd like to talk to *some*body. You see it's *this* way. I——

MME. DE MAILLY [*Sailing in from the hall at R.*]. Well *really!* I thought the servants were clearing the tables. In fact I thought that was *done—long* ago.

I've been waiting for you, Miss Penn. I believe I asked you to come into my room for a moment before you went out.

NAPOLEON. She hasn't *gone* yet, you see.

MME. DE MAILLY. Yes—so I *see*. I'll speak to you *here*—if Mr. Gibbs will be good enough to——

NAPOLEON [*Starting out*]. Don't mention it! [*Pointedly to* PENELOPE *as he turns at the door.*] I have to go up to get my hat. [*Behind* MME. DE MAILLY'S *back he indicates to* PENELOPE *that he will wait for her.*]

MME. DE MAILLY [*Taking an account out of her purse*]. I spoke to you last week about this little matter, Miss Penn. [*Giving* PENELOPE *the bill.*] But I haven't heard anything from you. I make it a rule in my business never to let anything run over two weeks, for I've found it a law of human nature that he who can't pay *one* week, can't pay two. Do you understand? [*A pause as* PENELOPE *fingers the paper staring desperately before her.*] I say—do you understand?

PENELOPE. Yes—yes, I understand.

MME. DE MAILLY. Are you able to meet this now?

PENELOPE. I will be—tonight.

MME. DE MAILLY. Tonight?

PENELOPE. I mean—yes, I will be tonight. That is—I *think* I will. I expect to be.

MME. DE MAILLY. You expect to? I'm afraid, my dear young lady, that will hardly do. I can't do business on other people's expectations you know.

PENELOPE [*Getting more and more nervous*]. Yes—I know!

MME. DE MAILLY. May I ask—are you expecting money from home?

PENELOPE. No—not exactly.

MME. DE MAILLY. I really must ask you to be a little more explicit. It's all strictly business with me.

PENELOPE. Well—I—I'm making a little money—and I—I expect to get some tonight. I'll know definitely tonight.

MME. DE MAILLY. Just what is your business, may I ask?

PENELOPE. I sing. That is—I——

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh— [*The pause is eloquent.*] I'm not at all curious—not at all. But naturally in my position I must know *just* the standing of my people. My house is *very* select—and it's really my duty to— Do you sing in *concert?*

PENELOPE. No—not—not exactly.

MME. DE MAILLY. I believe you *told* me when you *came* that you were looking for a position in a church choir. Didn't you?

PENELOPE. Yes I did. I *was.*

MME. DE MAILLY. Then *just* what *am* I to understand?

PENELOPE. Mrs.—a—Mme. de Mailly—it's this way. I—I expect to have a better—position—to be —to have a—*more* singing to do. I'll know positively tonight and I'll tell you all about it tomorrow.

MME. DE MAILLY. I don't like mysteries in my house. You are two weeks behind. If you are not able to meet this by tomorrow I must ask you to give up your room. Of course, this is strictly business with me.

PENELOPE. Of course.

MME. DE MAILLY [*Keeping the correct elegance of her manner*]. Another thing it is my duty in my position to speak of. I don't like your flirtation with this young man—and keeping him down here and so forth.

PENELOPE [*Indignantly*]. What?

MME. DE MAILLY. It looks bad. I've never had anything of that sort in my house and it——

PENELOPE. *What* sort?

MME. DE MAILLY. It makes people talk. A young person in your position must be very careful. A hint to the wise is sufficient, I presume. [MME. DE MAILLY *goes out through the hall to R.* PENELOPE *looks mechanically at the bill, folds it, and opens her purse. She takes out some change—counts it and puts it back into her shabby little purse with the bill—trying not to cry. As she goes up towards the hall she bursts into tears.* NAPOLEON *dashes down the stairs with his hat.*]

NAPOLEON. Now what's up?

PENELOPE [*Trying to pass him*]. Nothing.

NAPOLEON [*Drawing her back into the room*]. What did the dragon say to you?

PENELOPE. There isn't any place I can talk to you.

NAPOLEON. That's just what I *say*. No place we can escape these everlasting cats. Is there any place on earth you *will* meet me or *go* with me? Church—or anything?

PENELOPE [*In excited whispers*]. Would you? Do you ever go to the park? To Central Park?

NAPOLEON [*Trying not to laugh*]. The *park?*

PENELOPE. Would you like to meet me there this afternoon at five o'clock?

NAPOLEON. You bet. Watch me. Where? Name the spot.

[*They both are suddenly arrested by* MISS MACMASTERS *who, dressed for going out, marches down the stairs and into the room. She stares at them without speaking—goes to the sideboard—takes a tablet from her purse, puts it into her mouth and pouring a glass of water, drinks it and marches out to the L.—slamming the outer door.*]

Another little busy bee!

PENELOPE. Oh—everybody's looking at me. Everybody's watching me.

NAPOLEON. What do you expect in a hencoop?

MME. DE MAILLY [*Speaking from the hall at R.*] Evalena, have that room ready on the top floor.

PENELOPE [*Panic stricken.*] Oh—it's Mme. de Mailly. I thought she'd gone.

NAPOLEON. What of it? Let her come.

PENELOPE [*Whispering*]. What shall I do! Oh—go away—get some place.

NAPOLEON. What on earth's the matter?

PENELOPE. Do something! Get some place! *Hide!* Behind that door! [*She points to the R. door of the center folding doors—pushing* NAPOLEON *in that direction and quickly gets behind the L. door herself. The room is apparently empty as* MME. DE MAILLY *comes into the entrance, wearing a large hat and drawing on her long gloves.*]

MME. DE MAILLY [*As Evalena appears at the pantry*

door]. And Evalena, if the lady who was here yesterday comes back—tell her I *may* have a vacant room next week—a hall room. That Miss Penn may leave tomorrow.

EVALENA [*Peering around the screen*]. Yes 'am.

MME DE MAILLY. And Evalena, get these tables cleared at once—and don't let this delay occur again. I shall be back to luncheon. [*She goes out at L.* EVALENA *disappears.*]

NAPOLEON [*After a moment—cautiously putting his head out from behind the door*]. She's gone.

[*He comes out and goes over to* PENELOPE*'s side, bringing her from behind the door.*] Is that true what she said?

PENELOPE [*Choking with tears*]. Please go now.

NAPOLEON. Were you going away without telling me? [PENELOPE *turns her back and bursts into tears.*] Oh don't. Don't cry! What's the matter! Can't you tell a fellow?

PENELOPE. Don't say anything kind to me now. Just go away, please!

NAPOLEON. Where did you say you'd meet me in the park?

PENELOPE. Oh, I can't now.

NAPOLEON. You've *got* to. Where is it?

PENELOPE. Oh please go! Somebody else will come.

NAPOLEON. I won't go a step till you tell me where you'll meet me.

PENELOPE [*In a desperate whisper*]. Go in the center entrance on 59th Street and turn down the first path to the right—the first bench. It's quiet.

NAPOLEON [*Imitating her whisper*]. What time?

PENELOPE. Five o'clock—no—half past five. Half *past*, I couldn't get there at five.

NAPOLEON. I'll be there!

PENELOPE. Hurry! Go on.

NAPOLEON. Sure, now. Don't you dodge me.

PENELOPE. No—no—go on!

NAPOLEON. If anybody interrupts us *there*, I'll shy a brick at 'em.

PENELOPE [*Laughing and crying*]. Sh! Sh! *Sh!*

[NAPOLEON *tiptoes out in melodramatic strides.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT II

TIME: *Late afternoon of the same day.*

SCENE: *Central Park—rather an open space with a rustic arbor at center covered with wisteria vines in full bloom. In the arbor is a round rustic table with seats about it. Stone steps lead down from the arbor to a path which runs diagonally across the stage. A rustic bench is just above the path at right. Shrubs, rocks and trees are at either side and a small lake is slightly seen at the back. Rough stone steps at the right entrance lead down to the grass from a higher level.*

AT CURTAIN: PENELOPE, *wearing a very simple and diaphanous frock and hat, comes down the steps, looking about eagerly, and after a disappointed moment hesitates, then goes slowly to sit on the bench where she continues to peer at the entrance anxiously, looking repeatedly at her watch.*

Going to the left entrance to look off she decides not to wait and runs up the steps and out of sight.

After a moment NAPOLEON *dashes down the same steps, stops—looks about energetically—walks back and forth, looks at his watch and goes back the same way he came.*

Another moment and PENELOPE *comes back, looking more disappointed and anxious, and is about to go*

again when she suddenly hears something and hides behind the shrubs at left.

NAPOLEON *comes down the steps again, sits on the bench and waits impatiently.* PENELOPE *steals out from the shrubs and strolls down the path with elaborate indifference as if she had just arrived.*

NAPOLEON *starts toward her with relief and delight.*

PENELOPE. Oh, did I keep you waiting? I'm awfully sorry.

NAPOLEON. I've been chasing around here up and down. I began to think I'd come to the wrong place.

PENELOPE. I'm sorry—but it doesn't matter how long a man waits for a girl, does it? And it's horrid for a girl to wait for a man.

NAPOLEON. Wouldn't you wait a minute for me?

PENELOPE. Not a second.

NAPOLEON. I'm glad I got here first then. Come and sit down. How are you? [*Smiling at her after they settle themselves on the bench.*] Where did you have lunch today?

PENELOPE [*Hesitating*]. Why—at the house.

NAPOLEON. 39 East? [*She nods.*] Sure?

PENELOPE. Of course.

NAPOLEON. Very funny. I didn't see you. I was there.

PENELOPE [*Very much confused*]. Were you?

NAPOLEON. I get off early Saturdays and I nearly broke my neck to get up to the house for lunch today and you weren't there.

PENELOPE. Well—I—I—I was there—but I—I—didn't go down to lunch.

NAPOLEON Haven't you had any luncheon?

PENELOPE. No. Yes, of course I——

NAPOLEON. Oh, you went out for lunch. [*A pause.*] None of my business, you mean. You're sorry you asked me to come. I'll go. [*A hand organ is heard off left playing La Paloma.*]

PENELOPE. You wouldn't understand.

NAPOLEON. Oh, never mind me.

PENELOPE. I would like to talk to somebody.

NAPOLEON. Any old thing will do, I suppose.

PENELOPE. I want to talk to *you.*

NAPOLEON. Then, for heaven's sake *do.*

PENELOPE. I think you are horrid. I can't tell you way over there. [*Beginning to cry as he slides to the other end of the bench.*]

NAPOLEON. Oh, don't—don't do that.

PENELOPE. You think I am awfully silly.

NAPOLEON. Not a bit, cry your head off.

PENELOPE. You think it isn't very dignified to sit here on a bench in the park, and talk to a man I've only met in a boarding house. I never even met you —I just——

NAPOLEON. No, we didn't meet, I went after you.

PENELOPE. Mother would think it was awful, she wouldn't understand, but *you* understand, don't you?

NAPOLEON. I understand if you haven't got any place else in the whole town to go, there is nothing the matter with a bench in the park. Hang it all, whose business is it what you do? Nobody's doing anything *for* you. You can do as you please.

PENELOPE. Yes, but it is all so queer and funny. If anybody had told me a few months ago that I'd be

sitting here with you, I'd have died of mortification.

NAPOLEON. You would?—Well you've got a lot to learn, and the first thing is that you can do anything you want to do—if you *will.*

PENELOPE. Well, you won't think I'm silly if I begin at the beginning and tell you all about everything?

NAPOLEON. That's what I am here for.

PENELOPE. Well—You know I told you that I made the money to come away from home by giving concerts?

NAPOLEON. Um.

PENELOPE. It wasn't so awfully *much* money—you know of course.

NAPOLEON. Not a vast sum I should judge.

PENELOPE. And it didn't last so awfully long—and—— [*Her voice breaks—he puts his hand over hers and she lets it stay.*] And I— After I'd tried *every*thing—at last one man, a sort of a choir-master or something, said the only thing *he* could think of for me to do was— Well in the *first* place he explained that it took just as much wire pulling and influence and —and all kinds of things to get a position in a *church choir* as—as anything else.

NAPOLEON. You bet. Graft and pull in everything. Well?

PENELOPE. But—but don't think I didn't try—I did! Oh I did! and then this last man said it was *hopeless* and the best thing for me to do do was—Oh, I— You'll think it's awful.

NAPOLEON. Do *what?*

PENELOPE. To go in the chorus.

NAPOLEON. The *chorus? You?*

PENELOPE. Yes—me.

NAPOLEON. Good Lord!

PENELOPE. *Oh!* I knew you'd think it was awful. [*She cries again.*]

NAPOLEON. No, I don't! No I don't! I like your pluck. Go on!

PENELOPE. He told me where to go and I—I—went—and they—they *took* me.

NAPOLEON. *Took* you? Well I should say they *would* take you. [*He moves nearer to her—putting an arm about her.*]

PENELOPE [*Drawing away*]. *Oh!* You *see!* You *see!* You don't understand. You think you can do that just because I'm in the chorus.

NAPOLEON [*Moving back quickly*]. Not at all. Not at all. I—I just want to tell you how much I—how much I admire your—your—force of character for *going* into the chorus.

PENELOPE [*Looking at him deeply*]. I don't know whether you *mean* that or not.

NAPOLEON. Yes, you do. You know I mean it. What show are you in? Where is it?

PENELOPE. At the Vanity.

NAPOLEON. The Vanity? My word! [*He laughs.*]

PENELOPE. What are you laughing at?

NAPOLEON. Nothing. Are you one of the girls that——

PENELOPE [*Gasping*]. Have you *seen* it?

NAPOLEON. Sure—I've seen it.

PENELOPE [*Terrified*]. *When* did you see it?

NAPOLEON. Oh, three or four weeks ago.

PENELOPE [*Relieved*]. Oh—then you didn't see *me*. I've only been there three days.

NAPOLEON. I'll go again. I'll go tonight.

PENELOPE. Oh no—no—*no!*

NAPOLEON. Sure I will—and we'll go out to supper afterwards.

PENELOPE. No, I really couldn't.

NAPOLEON. Oh—maybe you have another date with somebody else. [*Giving her a new keen look.*]

PENELOPE. I think you're perfectly horrid. I've humiliated myself just to make you understand because I—I don't want *you*—to—*mis*understand. [*He moves closer to her.*] I went into the chorus because if I—I—*hadn't*—I would have had to go home—because there wasn't any more money. [*Desperately.*] I won't give up. I *won't!* I *won't!* Just because this is hard—I'm not going to give up all my ambitions—all my dreams of what I am going to do. I won't give up. I won't. I *must make some money some way.* And I *will!*

NAPOLEON. Bully for you! But—how are you going to? I mean—I suppose you aren't going to get rich exactly in the chorus. Can't send Johnny and Tommy and all the rest of 'em to college—on the *chorus.*

PENELOPE. Not right *away*, of course—but if I get on, I'll surely *make* money. Why some of the girls dress perfectly *beautifully.* [*He looks at her quickly—about to laugh—but doesn't.*] Some of them come in taxicabs and seem so happy and successful—and they haven't important parts either—and not *very*

good voices—at least they don't seem very good to me—but perhaps I'm not a judge of just that kind.

NAPOLEON [*After listening in amused amazement*]. No—perhaps you're not a judge of *just that kind.*

PENELOPE. They're strange sort of girls—not a bit like anybody I've ever seen before. At first I thought—Oh I couldn't bear it! But I'm getting used to them, and some of them have been *very* kind to me. They're good hearted. But, oh *goodness*, the way they *talk!* It makes one broad though—to come in contact with all kinds of people. Don't you think? You have *no idea* what they're like till you *see* them. Did *you* ever see one—a *real* chorus girl—off the stage? [NAPOLEON *laughs aloud.*] What's the matter? Oh, I see the joke. You've seen *me*—but that isn't what I *mean.*

NAPOLEON [*Controlling his laughter*]. See here—you know—you don't know what you're doing. You have to get out of this—the sooner the better.

PENELOPE. *I won't!* It's a chance. If I give this up I'd have to go straight home and give up everything I've tried to do. It's a chance. It's a stepping stone.

NAPOLEON. Yes—the chorus is a stepping stone all right—all right, but you've got to watch your step.

PENELOPE. I'm not afraid. Father says we can dignify *any* work by a noble purpose. It isn't the thing I'd have chosen, but it's *work* and I'm very thankful to get it—very thankful, and every night when I get to the stage door and my heart beats so I can hardly go in—I keep saying to myself—"nothing great was ever done without hard work," and then I

think of Mother and then I go in, and all evening, while I'm trying to smile when I want to cry, I remember that Father says, "Strong souls can go down into the valley of humiliation and come out clean and unhurt." I was saying the "valley of humiliation" so hard to myself this afternoon at the matinee, that when I stepped on a girl's foot and she gave me a push and said "Where do you think you are?"—I said "In the valley of humiliation." Wasn't that funny?

NAPOLEON. Pretty funny, but somehow I can't laugh. You are the last girl in the world for this sort of thing, you know. In the first place, you'll never get on. You're up against a stone wall.

PENELOPE. You just wait. The stone wall is going to melt away and all my dreams are coming true, some day—some day.

NAPOLEON. Gee! I wish I had your imagination —I wouldn't work at all. You've done one wise thing, you've decided to leave 39 East. They wouldn't stand for the chorus at 39 East.

PENELOPE. But, I'm not going to leave.

NAPOLEON. The Missus said you were this morning.

PENELOPE. But she didn't mean that.

NAPOLEON. She seemed to mean it.

PENELOPE. I didn't want to tell you that part of it. It's too awful. I never can.

NAPOLEON. What? What do you mean?

PENELOPE. You wouldn't see how it could happen to a nice girl. You don't really know who I am anyway, and you wouldn't understand that I could still be just as nice and dignified as if it hadn't happened.

NAPOLEON. Good Lord! Tell me what you're talking about. *What* happened? You've *got* to tell me.

PENELOPE. It's the awfullest thing in the world.

NAPOLEON. Tell me, little girl, don't be afraid.

PENELOPE. She, Madam de Mailly, told me this morning, I'd have to leave tomorrow, if, if I—— [*Sobbing.*]

NAPOLEON. Well——

PENELOPE. If I didn't pay the rest of my board.

NAPOLEON. Is that all? [*With a gasp of relief*].

PENELOPE. All? It's the most disgraceful thing that could possibly happen. If the people knew it at home, I could never, never hold up my head again.

NAPOLEON. Look here, you know—what of it? What's a board bill? That's easy. The thing for you to do is to march in tomorrow and throw the money at her, and tell her you wouldn't live in her old house. You'll soon be making lots of money, as you say, and in the meantime, I'll just fix up that little affair, and——

PENELOPE. I'll have some money tonight, and I can pay part of the bill and when she sees I'm really making money, it'll be all right.

NAPOLEON. But you can't tell her what you are doing.

PENELOPE. Oh! Yes, I——

NAPOLEON. Not for a minute—she'd turn you out.

PENELOPE. But she must know and understand and believe in me. I want her to.

NAPOLEON. That's not in her system. The only

thing for you to do is to pay the whole thing and get out. [*The plaintive music of the hand organ is heard again.*] Come along, and we'll get a bite to eat and talk things over.

PENELOPE. Oh, no, I'm not hungry.

NAPOLEON. Don't be foolish. You need some good hot food. That's what you need—and everything will look better to you then.

PENELOPE. I couldn't go any place. I'm a sight. I know my eyes are red as beets. [*Dabbing her eyes with her wet handkerchief.*]

NAPOLEON [*Taking a fresh handkerchief out of his pocket*]. Here—have a dry one. [*Taking hers and spreading it over the back of the bench.*] This is wet enough to give you the rheumatism. [PENELOPE *laughs a little hysterically as she dries her face with his handkerchief.* NAPOLEON *watches her.*] I like to see you do that—using my handkerchief I mean.

PENELOPE. Why?

NAPOLEON. Oh, a fellow likes to see the girl he likes—*need*—something of his. I *do* like you. I *more* than like you. You know that, don't you? [*Bending over her again with a new warmth.*]

PENELOPE. Oh, don't, please.

NAPOLEON. Poor kid! You're all in—aren't you? *Wait!* I'll tell you. You stay here and I'll skip out and get something and bring it in. Sort of a picnic. That's the goods. See?

PENELOPE [*Laughing a little*]. Oh, I'd like that much better. You're sure you don't mind?

NAPOLEON [*Starting to the steps at right*]. I'm crazy about picnics in the park. You stay there and

I'll see what I can dig up. Probably nothing but sandwiches and beer.

PENELOPE. Oh—*beer?*

NAPOLEON. Oh—don't you like beer?

PENELOPE. No—I don't believe I do.

NAPOLEON. What would you like?

PENELOPE. I just *love* ginger ale.

NAPOLEON [*Laughing and bounding up the steps*]. Yours for ginger ale!

PENELOPE. Don't be long. [*Calling after him.*]

NAPOLEON. Don't move till I get back! [*He calls back.* PENELOPE *watches him off and then wipes her eyes again. She stops to examine his handkerchief—pats it tenderly, and hangs it on the back of the bench beside hers. She then rises, shakes out her skirts—adjusts her frock and sitting again takes off her hat and tries to smooth her hair, looking into a very tiny mirror which she takes from her purse. Going up into the arbor she looks at the table and seats. Climbing up she breaks off some branches of wisteria and puts them in the crack of the table for a centerpiece and a small spray at either side as place decorations. Hanging her hat on the back of the chair she takes two cards and a tiny pencil from her purse and with a happy giggle sits to write something carefully on the cards, then puts one under each of the two small sprays of wisteria. Sitting on the steps a moment humming over and over a little song. Jumping down she sings as she hears the hand organ again and begins some dance steps, repeating them carefully and earnestly, trying to get them right. Gaining confidence she throws herself into the dance with more abandon and is dancing*

very prettily when a huge IRISH POLICEMAN *strolls on from the left and stops to stare at her in amazement. She dances toward him and stops in confusion and fear.*]

PENELOPE. Oh—I—I'm sorry. I—I didn't think anybody was about at all.

POLICEMAN. And what do you think you're doin'?

PENELOPE. I'm practicing a dance I have to do.

POLICEMAN. A queer place it is you're takin' fer to do it!

PENELOPE. Yes, I know, but I just happened——

POLICEMAN. There's some that would run yees in fer bein' tight or off your nut fer goin' on like that. But I guess you're harmless enough.

PENELOPE. Oh, I am, of course. Don't think——

POLICEMAN. Well, cut it out, cut it out. I've saw many a queer thing tried out in the park, but that's a new one. You'd better just move along now fer the looks of it.

PENELOPE. I can't—I'm meeting someone here.

POLICEMAN. Cut it out, cut it out. [*He starts off and sees the flowers on the table.*] You seem to be setting up house-keeping too. Ten dollars fine fer picking flowers, and you only need to read the signs.

PENELOPE. Oh, I'm sorry, but they were so tempting. This is a beautiful park, isn't it? What *would* people do without it?

POLICEMAN. *I* could do without it. Walking up and down in these environments all day ain't as big a snap as you think when you go after it.

PENELOPE. Is it so hard?

POLICEMAN. I wish the Lord it was. It's the softness of it that's killing me—the monotony of it. Never no scrap, never nothin' to do.

PENELOPE. Yes, I know. Something to do is the greatest thing in the world, isn't it?

POLICEMAN. Well, it depends on what you're doing.

PENELOPE. Oh, but we can do anything at all we *want* to do.

POLICEMAN. I wisht I could kid meself like that. I'd be going beyant the speed limit in one of thim automobiles now.

PENELOPE. Everybody wants something different, don't they?

POLICEMAN. There's an old dame sittin' on the rocks over there—gets out of her swell machine every day about this time, and leaves the chauffeur twiddlin' his thumbs, while she climbs up and perches. Diamonds all over 'er an' yit she sets on that rock like it was paradise—an' givin' me a quid about every so often fer fear I won't leave 'er do it. Can you beat that fer wantin' queer things?

PENELOPE. I don't think that's queer.

POLICEMAN. Don't you now? Well there's no tellin'. It's good we ain't all after wantin' the same seat at the same time, in the same place. That's all I can see in *that*. She's only one o' many that's got regler stiddy habbits, here on my beat. There's things I could tell you you wouldn't believe—and things a damned sight queerer than anything goin' on over in the zoo. I wouldn't git the park habit if I was you miss. A nice lookin' girl like you ought to have some place to pick flowers and make dates besides this.

Take my advice and cut it out. Cut it out and go along home. [*He goes off to the right without changing his stride or his expression.*]

PENELOPE. Poor man! [*There is a cheerful whistle from off R. She springs up eagerly,*—NAPOLEON *comes down the steps with a paper bag under each arm.*] Oh, I'm so glad you're back!

NAPOLEON. So am I. I had to chase six blocks to get these.

PENELOPE [*Going up into the arbor*]. The table's all ready. Look.

NAPOLEON. Huh? [*Springs up the steps.*]

PENELOPE. That's your place, and this is mine. [*Opening the bags.*] Oh chicken sandwiches! How perfectly heavenly! If there's anything I adore when I'm starving it's chicken sandwiches.

NAPOLEON. There are some hams there too.

PENELOPE. Oh and dear little pickles! Yum, yum! And here's the gingerale. But only one glass.

NAPOLEON. One's enough. The gingerale is for you.

PENELOPE. And dear little paper napkins! How sweet!

NAPOLEON. I had a terrible time deciding whether to get pink or purple.

PENELOPE. And you got *just* the right thing. See, it's perfect. [*Holding the napkin near a wisteria.*]

NAPOLEON. I had a flash, didn't I?

PENELOPE. Now! Dinner is served. Let us sit. [*Assuming a very grand manner.*]

NAPOLEON. Let's—by all means. Do you mind if I smoke?

PENELOPE. I shall be delighted, but first, you must serve me.

NAPOLEON. Of course. I'm a dub. Allow me. Some of the cold bird, Madam?

PENELOPE. Oh, thank you, it's delicious, I know. Oh, gracious it *is!* [*Having taken a bite.*]

NAPOLEON. How do you like housekeeping in the summer house, sort of a house boat, un?

PENELOPE. A yacht, a yacht it is.

NAPOLEON. On the river Nile.

PENELOPE. Oh no, on the Mediterranean, and now, what's that wonderful thing? [*Pointing to another sandwich.*]

NAPOLEON. Oh, my dear lady, this delicacy is something rare and precious. And wine, fair maid—wine from the far Islands of the sea. Wine that will warm your heart and bring the stars into thine eyes. Sip, oh sip!

PENELOPE. But you must share it, Prince.

NAPOLEON. Nay, nay, 'tis all for thee.

PENELOPE. Oh, true as I live, there's a faint, tiny little bit of moon, just a shadow she is. No, no, over the other shoulder—and you must make a wish.

NAPOLEON. Guess what I wished.

PENELOPE. I couldn't.

NAPOLEON. You know. What did you wish?

PENELOPE. One mustn't tell or it doesn't come true, but it was something beautiful and it *will* come true. See the little reflection of her in the lake? There's a reflection of everything somewhere in the world, isn't there? Don't you believe that, Prince?

NAPOLEON. What do you see reflected in my eyes?

PENELOPE. Oh trees and part of this vine and——

NAPOLEON. And what else?

PENELOPE. And me.

NAPOLEON. Yes. It's you. That's what's in my eyes. Don't you want to know what I'm thinking about now?

PENELOPE. Y-e-s—but it must be about the Mediterranean.

NAPOLEON. No—about you. I like this better than anything I ever did in my life. Gee, but you're pretty! [*Suddenly seizing her.*] Kiss me!

PENELOPE [*Trying to get away*]. Oh no. No—no!—Don't!

NAPOLEON. Why not?

PENELOPE. Oh—don't! I——

NAPOLEON [*Still holding her*]. Please kiss me. Why not? Why won't you?

PENELOPE. I don't *want* to.

NAPOLEON. Look at me. I don't see why you won't kiss me just once. *Please.* Not when I say please?

PENELOPE [*Seeing someone coming*]. Oh, horrors!

NAPOLEON. What's the matter?

PENELOPE. What shall I do? It's Mrs. Smith from the boarding house. Don't turn round.

NAPOLEON. Well—what of it?

PENELOPE. Oh, but you don't know—how awful it is. Oh, *talk*—say something.

NAPOLEON [*Talking energetically with his back to* MRS. SMITH *as she appears at the left*]. But, as I say

there are a great many things in life that are uncertain —for example, we can never say with any degree of surety that certain bodies will not approach at the most unexpected moments. [Mrs. Smith *entering comes slowly towards them and stops—staring at* Penelope *without speaking.* Penelope *looks at her helplessly.* Napoleon *goes on elaborately.*] Such being the case, you can readily understand, Miss Penn, that no scientific research has been able to determine at what moment—— [*He pauses and turns slowly to look at* Mrs. Smith.] Oh, good evening Mrs. Smith—beautiful evening.

Mrs. Smith [*With as much horror as possible*]. So this is where you *eat*, is it? I noticed you were not at the table for luncheon.

Napoleon. Out-door life is so much pleasanter—don't you think?

Mrs. Smith. Indoor life I would advise for some people.

Napoleon. Won't you join us in our humble repast?

Mrs. Smith. What? Young man, you forget who you're talking to. I consider that an insult. Because I've been agreeable to you is no reason you should expect me to wink at this. I don't approve of it. In fact, I'm *horrified.* [*She moves nearer so that she can see what is on the table and goes slowly off twisting her parasol and fluttering her frills and furbelows as effectively as possible.*]

Napoleon. Of all the rotten——

Penelope. Oh, don't. I wouldn't have had that

happen for anything. I suppose it *does* look dreadful —my being here—and she saw the *bottle!*

NAPOLEON. Shall we jump in the lake and end it all?

PENELOPE. Oh, you don't know how awful it is.

NAPOLEON. I know you're not going back to that house and let those women snub you. You've got too much sand for *that.* I know.

PENELOPE. I *have* to go back.

NAPOLEON. Why? Why do you?

PENELOPE. For a few days at least—but *how can*——? Oh—I—it's much harder than you know.

NAPOLEON. I'll tell you what to do, you go right over now and pay the bill, pack your trunk and tell Mme. de Mailly you'll send for it tomorrow. Then you go to the theatre, and I'll get you afterwards, and you can go to some—some nice—little hotel.

PENELOPE. Oh——

NAPOLEON. Just for tonight, I mean, 'till you find the right place to live.

PENELOPE. Oh, wouldn't I love to!

NAPOLEON. Then for Heaven's sake *do* it.

PENELOPE. I've told you I can*not* pay all of the bill now—and I can't leave until I *do* pay it. Oh, this is horrid! Let's not talk about it anymore, please.

NAPOLEON. But we've got to talk about it. What's a few dollars more or less? Why, if I were in a hole, wouldn't you help me out if you could? And you bet I wouldn't hesitate to accept it.

PENELOPE. Oh, but that's different. [*Sitting on the steps of the arbor.*]

NAPOLEON. Why is it different? Now, why is it different?

PENELOPE. You're a man.

NAPOLEON. Bosh, you are too sensible a girl to let that rubbish keep you from doing the right thing. You like me a little, don't you? [*Sitting beside her.*]

PENELOPE. You're just as nice as you can be. You've been an *awfully* good friend. I don't know what I should have done without you. I should have died of loneliness. It does seem awfully funny that I've told you everything. You're sure you don't think I'm——

NAPOLEON [*Taking her hands*]. I think you're the sweetest little girl in the world.

PENELOPE. I'm glad you think that. Sometimes I waken at night and it seems as if—— Oh, as if I were trying to fight a great unfriendly power of some kind and it's too strong for me. It seems to be the power of the whole world, saying—"Oh, you poor, silly, weak little girl, how do you think you can possibly struggle against me?" And I get cold and frightened. Then I wonder how many other girls there are who have come to this great city alone to try and *do* something—and how many have succeeded and how many have failed—wretched and broken-hearted. And then I wonder if I *have* undertaken an impossible thing —but when morning comes I feel as brave as a lion again and I've never dreamed of giving up—never for a minute.

NAPOLEON. You don't need to. I'll back you up. There—isn't anything I wouldn't do for you. Just let

me give you what you need for a few days, and then when you get straightened around—why—there you are. It'll be all over, and everything'll be all right. I can't bear to see you in such a hole. It needn't be at all, you know. I want to tell you—— [*Bending over her.*]

PENELOPE. No—No—I——

NAPOLEON. You're the sweetest—— [*He catches her in his arms and putting her head back kisses her in a long kiss. She releases herself and gets away from him.*]

PENELOPE. Why did you do that?

NAPOLEON [*Following her*]. Why shouldn't I?

PENELOPE. How *could* you?

NAPOLEON [*Going close to her and trying to take her hands*]. Why, don't take it like that. Why shouldn't I kiss you? Don't you know how much I——

PENELOPE [*Blazing with anger and wounded pride*]. I trusted you so! How *could* you! Oh, how *could* you! I'll never forgive myself—for telling you everything—for coming here.

NAPOLEON. Don't take it like that. Why I haven't——

PENELOPE. I want my hat. [*She tries to get to the bench. He stops her.*]

NAPOLEON. Now you're not going away alone—so don't think——

PENELOPE. Oh, yes I am. I *am* going alone. Why shouldn't I?

NAPOLEON. *Where* are you going?

PENELOPE. I'm going to the theatre.

NAPOLEON. Forget this! You need some help. I tell you I want to help you.

PENELOPE. I can take care of myself.

NAPOLEON. Well, what are you going to do? Now just what are you going to do? Are you going back to Mme. de Mailly with your paltry little fifteen dollars—or whatever it is you get—and ask her to trust you for the rest, and tell her you're in the chorus? And what will she do? She'll tell you to get out so quick you won't know what's happened.

PENELOPE [*With increasing anger and excitement*]. Oh no she won't. I know a way I can pay *all* of that bill tomorrow.

NAPOLEON. How?

PENELOPE. One of the managers of this opera says I have a very good voice and that he'll give me a better part in a few weeks when I've caught on. He says he wants to be a good friend to me——

NAPOLEON. *What?*

PENELOPE. He says *he* will pay my salary in advance for several weeks if I need it. He asked me to go to supper with him tonight so we could talk things over and——

NAPOLEON. You——

PENELOPE. I'll tell him then that I *would* like the advance and——

NAPOLEON. Do you know what you're doing?

PENELOPE. Of course I do.

NAPOLEON. Well you don't—any more than a baby. You can't go to supper with that man.

PENELOPE. Don't tell me what to do.

NAPOLEON. You can't take money from him. He means the wrong thing, I tell you. Do you understand? The wrong thing for you—the worst thing a man can mean.

PENELOPE. How dare you say that to me! How *dare* you!

NAPOLEON. Because I know.

PENELOPE. It isn't true.

NAPOLEON. Don't you know what it means when a man offers a girl money?

PENELOPE. *You* did. *You* said that, too. What did *you* mean? *Tell* me.

NAPOLEON. Penelope, a few minutes ago, you were only a pretty girl to me that I was awfully gone on. It was all up to you how it came out, but now you're something different. Do you believe me? Do you trust me?

PENELOPE. No.

NAPOLEON. You will, you're going back to that boarding house, and you're going to Mme. de Mailly, and face the music, and tell her you haven't any money, and that you've given up your job and are going home.

PENELOPE. Don't say another word to me. Don't ever speak to me again. I'm going to the theater.

NAPOLEON. You're going back to 39 East if I have to pick you up and carry you there, and tonight you'll be safe in your little hall room out of the muck of that comic opera and all the rest of this blasted, rotten old berg.

PENELOPE. I want to go. [*Trying to pass him.*]

NAPOLEON. Then I'll go with you.

PENELOPE. You can't.

NAPOLEON. Don't you know you're in danger? Don't you know you can't do what you're trying to do any more than you can——

PENELOPE. I don't believe anything you say.

NAPOLEON. Yes, you do. A good girl is the most helpless thing on earth, and I'm going to take care of you. Wait where's your hat? [*He goes into the arbor to get her hat.* PENELOPE *runs off right. He finds the hat and turns back, startled at not seeing her.*] Penelope where are you? Where are you, Penelope? Don't hide! It's late. Penelope, little girl, where are you? My God! [NAPOLEON *rushes off calling her.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT III

TIME: *Eleven o'clock the evening of the same day.*

SCENE: *The drawing room at 39 East.*

It is the typical long narrow room of old New York, with the fireplace and its ornate marble fireplace at center back, two long windows at right and double doors leading into the hall at left.

There are the usual heavy moldings and cornices and center piece in the ceiling, with the hideously magnificent chandelier. The walls are paneled in rose and gold, the windows are draped in lace and rose plush, and the furnishings are an accumulation, rather than a collection, of what has seemed to MADAME DE MAILLY *beautiful and desirable at different stages of her life.*

Oil paintings in the heaviest of gold frames, white marble statuettes on their mahogany pedestals, cabinets filled with traces of her travels, chairs and sofas of gold and brocade, crowd each other for space.

A very good grand piano stands at right, and a "conversation" chair as stiff and silly and unconducive to conversation as possible, holds a conspicuous place at right center.

AS THE CURTAIN RISES: *There is an air of festivity in the room.*

MADAME DE MAILLY *and her guests, in their best clothes, are doing their utmost to make her "evening" an important social occasion.*

The twins, looking more dovelike than ever, one with a blue fillet in her hair and the other with a pink one, are at the piano playing their best selection, "The Shepherd Boy," with much crossing of hands and trilling of trills.

Madame de Mailly, *looking very regal in purple velvet, holds the center of the room in a large armchair.* Mrs. Smith, *in a coquettish frock which almost makes her as young as she would like to be is giving a fine show of a flirtation with the little doctor as she sits on the sofa with him at left center, twinkling her eyes and her diminutive fan at him—much to that repressed gentleman's amazed discomfort.* Count Gionelli, *in his evening clothes of an out of date cut, is turning the leaves of a magazine and making no effort to hide his excruciating agony as he endures the music.* Timothy *leans over the piano, turning the pages for the performers with kindly but amused goodnature.*

Miss MacMasters, *in orthodox black silk and lace, is enjoying a nap in a very comfortable chair down left.*

Madame de Mailly, *having made an impressive ceremony of listening to the music as she majestically waves her enormous feather fan, can no longer restrain her curiosity and goes on with her conversation with* Mrs. Smith.

Mme. de Mailly. Are you *sure* there was a bottle?

Mrs. Smith. As sure as I am that you are sitting there. Why I tell you I went right *up* to them, right up close to the table and there they sat.

Mme. de Mailly. Didn't she say anything *at all?*

Mrs. Smith. Not a word. *He* was brazen enough

—rattled along as fast as he could, trying to carry it off with a light hand you know, but she was *paralyzed* when she saw *me*. She simply looked as if she wanted the earth to swallow her up.

MME. DE MAILLY. And what did you say he said?

MRS. SMITH. Oh good gracious, I don't know *what* he said. I was so shocked and excited. Such things frighten me so you know. I'm not used to it. I've always been so protected and——

MME. DE MAILLY. And what did *you* say?

MRS. SMITH. Me? Oh dear knows. I don't suppose I said *anything*. I expect I was too embarrassed. I expect I——

MME. DE MAILLY. I expect you managed to say a little something. It's the first time in my life I've ever been deceived by anybody in my house. [*They turn as* TIMOTHY *applauds loudly*—SADIE *and* MYRTLE *having finished their selection. The others make a lame attempt at a little applause.*]

TIMOTHY. Very neat! Fine and dandy! You must have put in many a hard hour at that.

MME. DE MAILLY [*Finishing her approval by tapping on the arm of her chair*]. That's charming young ladies, charming. I appreciate it very much. I'm only sorry that all the rest of my guests didn't come in this evening to hear you.

MRS. SMITH. Yes, they don't seem to care much to come in, do they?

MISS MACMASTERS [*Opening her eyes*]. What? I thought I heard a noise.

TIMOTHY. You did. It was the finale, Miss MacMasters, piano forte.

Miss McMasters. Oh! Was *that* it?

Mrs. Smith. It was lovely, young ladies. How nicely you do play. I don't see how you keep it up.

Sadie. Oh thank you.

Mrs. Smith. I haven't heard that piece since I was a girl.

Myrtle. Oh it isn't as old as that. But we don't play the new popular light selections. We don't believe in them. But I don't think we did ourselves justice this evening at all, especially in the last movement.

Sadie. No, we didn't.

Mme. de Mailly [*Who has been thinking intently*]. What kind of a bottle was it?

Mrs. Smith. W-e-l-l. I was so frightened, you know, I'm not really sure whether it was beer or champagne. I know so little about those things you know. Though of course I was accustomed to champagne in my own home.

[*The* Count *and* Timothy *exchange looks and winks.*]

Miss MacMasters. Champagne fiddle sticks! He's not spending money like that. It was probably whiskey. [*To* Mme. de Mailly.] What are you going to do?

Mme. de Mailly. I'll handle the situation—in my own way. How did you enjoy the music, Count? I say, Count Gionelli, how did you enjoy the music?

Count [*Rolling his eyes in despair*]. Will you excuse me if I do not answer? I have heard all the great music of the world.

Mrs. Smith. Oh, of course. I understand perfectly, Count. Italy is full of music. When I was there we used to stay out in our gondolas late as we possibly could to hear the gondoliers sing.

Count. When I say *music*—I mean the great artists. Nothing else means anything but noise to me. You must forgive me. My whole life—a—it is music. It means to me too much. If it is not great it hurts my ears, it hurts my soul.

Dr. Hubbard. [*Rising with a spark of fire*]. Miss Clarence plays very well, indeed, *we* think,—very creditably and she has given us a great deal of pleasure many times. We appreciate it.

Timothy. Hear—hear. [*Applauding deafeningly.*]

Mrs. Smith. Oh you're so sweet and tactful, doctor, when anybody says the wrong thing.

The Count. How could I? How could I say so many things wrong?

Miss MacMasters. It seems quite easy for you.

Dr. Hubbard. It's hardly fair to judge our music by—by foreign standards. Rather uncalled for. [*Not willing to forgive the* Count.]

Myrtle [*Rising*]. Oh don't say any more please. I understand Count Gionelli. I know music doesn't mean to me what it does to him. [*To the* Count.] It means—something beautiful and important to you—doesn't it? But it's been to me just drudgery. Sadie might have really played if some one had helped her at the right time. If she had been *free*—and——

Count. And what—my dear Signorina? [*With sudden sympathy.*]

MYRTLE. And if mamma hadn't been so afraid for us. We—we have lived very—Well—if things had been different, you know.

COUNT. Ah—I know—I know. [*Turning to Sadie*]. But you feel in your heart what great music is—do you not?

SADIE. Perhaps. Just once I heard someone sing —just once—who made me understand. I knew then it wasn't the practising—but what's in—in one's—one's self—that makes music—and one mustn't shut it up. And that's what I have been doing—shutting it up too long. Mamma didn't—understand. But she did the best she could.

COUNT [*Bowing over* SADIE'S *hand and kissing it*]. Oh, mia cara, mia-cara, you have said the sadness of the whole world. There is so much that is beautiful shut up in ourselves because—someone doesn't understand.

SADIE [*Much embarrassed and drawing her hand away*]. Oh—I'm afraid I've talked a great deal—about myself.

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh don't regret that, my dear. You don't talk half enough. I very much enjoy personal conversation myself. Don't you, Doctor? I think it's good for us.

DOCTOR. Yes, I think myself a little candid self analysis is good for us occasionally. I encourage it in my practice. [*Walking about with his hands crossed behind his back in his best professional manner.*]

MRS. SMITH. Oh dear! I simply can't bear to talk about myself. I'm too shy. It's the last thing on

earth I ever say anything about. [TIMOTHY *laughs.*] Why what are you laughing at? You always see something funny in everything, Mr. O'Brien.

TIMOTHY. That's about all I've got to thank God for. Don't ask me to suppress *that.*

MME. DE MAILLY. No—no—I don't believe in suppression of any kind. I'm very advanced in my thinking. Control—yes—but not *suppression.* Don't you agree with me, Doctor?

DOCTOR. Oh yes. We scientific men are going in for that more and more. But it's a deep and delicate subject—just where control should stop and emotion have full sway.

MRS. SMITH. Oh dear! Just how much do you believe in giving way, doctor?

DOCTOR. Well—I couldn't answer that off hand. I should have to explain it to you scientifically.

MRS. SMITH. Oh dear!

MISS MACMASTERS. I don't see that it takes much science to know that we have to control with an iron grip just about all there is in us—in order to get along in public at all.

TIMOTHY. In other words the best policy is to keep your shirt on. [*He shouts with laughter—everyone else is shocked.*]

MME. DE MAILLY. Yes, Miss MacMasters, in my position I often find it difficult to decide how much to control.

THE COUNT [*Going on with his new interest in* SADIE]. Perhaps you would do me the great honor to come to the Opera with me sometime—Signorina—if you do not mind to sit very high up.

MRS. SMITH. Oh *my!*

SADIE. Oh—oh thank you—so much. We used to go three times every season—but Sister and I have given it up. It—it's wonderful, isn't it?

COUNT. And what opera do you like the best, Signorina?

SADIE. Oh—any one will do.

COUNT. No—no—what one do you love best with all your heart?

SADIE [*After a pause with a warm sigh*]. Romeo and Juliet. It is so—so beautiful and—and so sweet —so lovely—and—and so——

COUNT. So warm—so passionate.

MRS. SMITH. *Goodness me!*

SADIE. Y-e-s.

COUNT. Such an outpouring of the heart.

SADIE. Y-e-s. [*Quite carried away.*]

COUNT. We shall go. We shall go.

SADIE. Thank you—but Sister must go.

TIMOTHY. What's the matter with you both going? Four of us, you know.

DOCTOR. Yes—certainly—I was just going to say that. I should be only too happy to escort one of you. [*Not wishing to be left out of this social gaiety.*]

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh that's very nice. Very charming indeed to make up a party.

[*The three men surround* SADIE *and* MYRTLE—*all talking at once.* SADIE *is warmed into sudden animation by this new attention.* MRS. SMITH *amazed at being left out in the cold, tosses her head.* MME. DE MAILLY *is delighted that her young ladies have become a success.*]

MISS MACMASTERS. Don't tell me the doctor's got enough red blood in his veins to stir up something.

MRS. SMITH [*Trying to attract the men's attention —as* SADIE *laughs aloud*]. Gracious! I shouldn't have dreamed that Miss Clarence could be so boisterous. Would you, Mme. de Mailly?

MME. DE MAILLY. Nonsense! I love gaiety. The young ladies have great possibilities, you know, if they are just brought out.

MRS. SMITH. Yes—so it *seems*. It's amazing what a silly side men *do* bring out of *some* women—if they get a little *sudden* attention.

MISS MACMASTERS. Not so amazing as what it brings out when they suddenly *don't* get it. [*The group at the other side of the room grows more and more hilarious as they talk among themselves.* MRS. SMITH *is unable to bear it.*]

MRS. SMITH. Doctor, I'm going to sneeze. I know I am. [*She forces a hysterical sneeze.*]

TIMOTHY. God bless you!

DOCTOR [*Hurrying back to* MRS. SMITH]. Oh pardon me. Are you cold? Is anything open here?

MISS MACMASTERS. I'm very comfortable, thank you.

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh, yes I think the temperature of the room is just right—just about the way I always keep it.

COUNT [*to* TIMOTHY]. Could a-you—would-a-you be so vera kind as to give me another cigarette?

TIMOTHY [*Taking a box of cigarettes from his pocket*]. Sure, there's one left. I'll give you the box, too, so you'll know the name of 'em. You can

buy 'em anywhere—anywhere at all. Help yourself.

COUNT. Thank you vera much.

MRS. SMITH [*As the Doctor adjusts a pillow behind her shoulders*]. Oh thank you, doctor. You do know how to adjust a pillow, don't you?

TIMOTHY. He ought to—right in his line—pills and pillows. [*The ladies freeze him with disapproval.*]

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh Mr. O'Brien, you are so comic. [*Not wishing any one of her guests to be reproached.*]

MRS. SMITH. [*Going back to her exciting subject.*] She wasn't here for luncheon nor dinner. What time of night do you suppose she will turn up?

MME. DE MAILLY [*Rising*]. Oh, let us change the subject and have a little more music. You sing again, Mr. O'Brien.

TIMOTHY. Sure! Who's going to play for me this time?

MME. DE MAILLY. Miss Sadie will, of course!

SADIE. Oh, no, no! Myrtle plays a much better accompaniment than I.

MYRTLE. Oh, no. No I don't. You play much better than I do, sister dear.

TIMOTHY. Well then you can both play. Take turns. Each fellow gets a verse. See? You first, Miss Sadie.

SADIE [*She seats herself at the piano*]. Very well. [*The three musicians select the music and arrange it on the piano.*]

MISS MACMASTERS [*To the doctor*]. I think she ought to put the girl right out of the house. Right out of the——

MRS. SMITH. You're so much more stern than I am. I'm so gentle I haven't the heart to hurt a fly. But if *you* think it ought to be done, of course an *older* woman knows best.

MME. DE MAILLY. Now, Mr. O'Brien, if you're ready to sing—I'm sure we're ready to listen.

TIMOTHY. Sure. I have a little cold but I'll do my best. [*He begins "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep" in an astoundingly deep bass voice which gets deeper and deeper and his face more and more red as he goes on. As he is about to begin the last verse the hall door is thrown open and* NAPOLEON *rushes in. They all turn to him. There is a moment's pause.*]

NAPOLEON. Is she here? Miss Penn?

MME. DE MAILLY. She is not.

NAPOLEON. I mean is she in the house?

MME. DE MAILLY. I really can't say. She hasn't done me the courtesy to tell me where she——

NAPOLEON. Will you send up to her room and see if she's there?

MME. DE MAILLY. Well really——

NAPOLEON. There's just a chance that she is. Will you please? I'll ring. [*He presses the bell near the door.*]

MRS. SMITH [*Rising*]. If *you* don't know where she is how should we?

NAPOLEON. Well, I don't know, but I've been tearing up the town to find out. May I speak to you alone, Mrs. de Mailly, just a minute? I'm in a hurry.

MME. DE MAILLY. I think you can say anything you have to say right here before everyone.

NAPOLEON. No, I can't. I might say too much.

[*Looking at* MRS. SMITH.] I can see the park incident has been made the most of.

MRS. SMITH. Don't speak to me like that. I'm not accustomed to such low scenes. It shocks me so I can't stand it. Doctor, take me away, please. [*She sobs.*]

[ROSA *comes in from the hall as* MRS. SMITH *starts out on* DR. HUBBARD'S *arm.*]

MME. DE MAILLY. Rosa, go up to Miss Penn's room and see if she's there.

NAPOLEON. And be as quick as you can, please.

[ROSA *goes out.*]

MISS MACMASTERS. Heaven knows *I* don't want to hear what you have to say.

SADIE. Neither do we.

MYRTLE. Oh no indeed!

MISS MACMASTERS. It's all disgusting anyway. If *I* had been running this house it never would have——

MME. DE MAILLY. But as it happens you're *not.*

[MISS MACMASTERS *marches out.*]

MRS. SMITH. Oh, dear, I'm going to cry. I know I am.

DR. HUBBARD. No, you're not. There! There! Come along.

[DR. HUBBARD *takes her out.* SADIE *and* MYRTLE *follow.*]

COUNT [*Cheerfully and with unexpected animation*]. It is a crime—is it, in America for a young lady to meet a young man in the park? Oh, Italy—my Italy —how it mak-a-me love you! I wish you good fortune Signor. [*He strolls down to the hall door.*]

TIMOTHY [*To the* COUNT]. We *take care of our*

girls, you know. [*To* NAPOLEON.] Do you mean to say you don't know where she is and she can't be found?

[*The* COUNT *turns back at the door to listen.*]

NAPOLEON. That's what I mean.

TIMOTHY. Good Heavens! Why don't we get at it then?

NAPOLEON. I've been at it for hours. What do you take me for?

TIMOTHY. I'll get my hat and wait for you in the hall.

COUNT. I also am at your service.

NAPOLEON. Thanks. That's great. I'll be with you in a few minutes.

[TIMOTHY *and the* COUNT *hurry out.*]

MME. DE MAILLY. Now what is all this Mr. Gibbs? I don't like it and I won't *have* these goings on in my house so don't try to——

NAPOLEON. You don't think I'd be fool enough to try to put anything over on you?

MME. DE MAILLY. You couldn't.

NAPOLEON. Listen. I found out this afternoon she's terribly up against it and has gone in the chorus of a musical show because she's——

MME. DE MAILLY. *What?*

NAPOLEON. Because she's got too much grit to give up and go home.

MME. DE MAILLY. If that's true why hasn't she told *me*. Stuff! She's trying to make you sorry for her.

NAPOLEON. Good Lord woman, don't be a fool and don't take me for one. I know what I'm talking about and don't you make any mistake about that! If she

comes back here you make her stay. No matter what happens—make her *stay!* And don't say anything more about the money she owes!

MME. DE MAILLY. She *does owe* it and she'll have to *pay* it.

NAPOLEON. Please wait! I also found out that one of the managers of the show has—has noticed her—promised her a better part—offered to—to advance her money. He asked her to go to supper with him tonight. I tried to tell her what it means. Tried to stop her. She got away from me. Then I tried to get at her in the theater and couldn't get past that damned door man. She did go with him—right after the first act—one of the girls told me. I've got two men on the job who know him—and I've been chasing every place myself. I don't want this thing to get out and all over town if I can help it. But I'm nearly crazy. Oh, if I could only get my hands on him. The beast! The beast!

MME. DE MAILLY. You're making a great fuss over nothing at all. Mark my words if she went with him she went—because she *wanted* to. That girl knows what she's doing.

NAPOLEON. Oh rot!

ROSA [*Coming back*]. She ain't up there, Mme. de Mailly.

MME. DE MAILLY. Very well. That will do. [ROSA *goes.*] You see she hasn't come back, and she *won't.* This is the last place on earth she would come. She's a *very* clever little thing and you've lost your head. How can you be such a ninny? You know as

well as I do no girl gets into that sort of thing unless she——

NAPOLEON. Oh, please—please, don't give me that old argument. She's good, I tell you—good! She put me in my place quick enough when I tried to get fresh today. Why, she defended the man. She believes in him—believes it's a business proposition. Oh, Mrs. de Mailly, you're the only woman in this whole town I can go to for help. There's a *chance*, just a *chance* she may come back here to give you that money. If she does—keep her—keep her! My God! I'm talking to you about the girl I want to marry!

MME. DE MAILLY. What? Oh come now!

NAPOLEON. I didn't yesterday, but I got my eyes open today all right. She's the sweetest, most innocent thing I've ever known and I've been a fool and a—well, a fool! I didn't understand at all. I was like you. I thought she could take care of herself. I didn't know anything so sweet and so helpless *could* be alone in this town and keep good. She's good, you know, good . . . through and through and through. You've got to help me, Mrs. de Mailly. I'm going to find her if I never do anything else. She *might* come back here for her things—or something. She might and you'll keep her, won't you?

MME. DE MAILLY. My dear boy, I'm sorry for you. But you—— [*Shaking her head.*] I'll keep her, of course—but you'll have to wake up. I thought you were a man about town enough to . . .

NAPOLEON. Never mind me—but promise you'll keep her. Will you?

MME. DE MAILLY. Yes, I'll do that—for tonight at least—but I don't promise anything after——

[NAPOLEON *starts to the door as* TIMOTHY *opens it.*]

TIMOTHY. You ought to hurry.

NAPOLEON. I've got a taxi waiting. Come on, I'll tell you how much I've done. [*They hurry out together.* MME. DE MAILLY *looking after them a moment, shrugs her shoulders and turns away to adjust a chair as* ROSA *comes in quickly, closing the door and going close to* MME. DE MAILLY.]

ROSA. She *was* up in her room—packing 'er trunk —but she wouldn't let me tell you till he'd went. She wants to see you but she don't want to see *him.*

MME. DE MAILLY. This is a pretty how-dy-do. Tell her to come down here.

ROSA. She's a awful nice little . . .

MME. DE MAILLY. Do as I tell you. Quick—I said!

ROSA. She's so *little.*

MME. DE MAILLY. Quick! I said, and close those doors.

ROSA [*Hurrying out*]. Yas'm.

[MME. DE MAILLY *thinks a moment—puts out one light near the piano—straightens the music, and turns, arrested as* PENELOPE *comes in swiftly and quietly and closing the door goes to* MME. DE MAILLY.]

PENELOPE. I came to pay my bill. [*Opening her purse and beginning to count some crisp new bills.*] Two weeks I owe you. Will you count that, please, and receipt this? [MME. DE MAILLY *stares at* PENELOPE, *without speaking or looking at the money.*] Will you count it please? I've packed my trunk and will send for it tomorrow. I'm going now.

MME. DE MAILLY. Where are you going?

PENELOPE. That doesn't matter.

MME. DE MAILLY. Yes, it does. I insist upon knowing.

PENELOPE. I don't care to tell you. I'm paying you every penny I owe you so you have no right to ask me.

MME. DE MAILLY. Oh yes, I have. Where are you going?

PENELOPE. I won't tell you.

MME. DE MAILLY. Why not?

PENELOPE. Because I don't want to.

MME. DE MAILLY. Why on earth *shouldn't* you tell me? If you're not doing anything you're ashamed of you will—quick enough.

PENELOPE. I'm going to a friend's.

MME. DE MAILLY. What friend? I thought you told me you didn't have any friends. I thought you told me you didn't know anyone in New York at all. Where did you pick up——

PENELOPE. Why should I tell you? Why should I? You didn't care whether I knew anyone or not this morning when you said I'd have to leave if I didn't pay. You didn't care then whether I had any friends—or *where* I was going.

MME. DE MAILLY. Maybe I didn't. I was talking business then, this is different. It's midnight. I can't let a girl go out of my house at this time of night without knowing where she— *What* friend? Who is it? If it's all right you'll tell me.

PENELOPE. It's a new friend. You've been very unkind to me and I never want to see you or come into

this house again and there's no reason why you should know any of my affairs. [*She puts the money on the piano.*] Please write your name.

MME. DE MAILLY. Not until you tell me.

PENELOPE. Then I'll go without it! [*She starts towards the door*—MME. DE MAILLY *moves quickly between her and the door.*] You have no right to do this. Why do you care now when you never did before? Why are you so anxious to know anything about me now—when you've let me alone all winter? Why do you suddenly begin to ask me questions now that I'm able to take care of myself?

MME. DE MAILLY. Why are you able to take care of yourself so suddenly? What's happened?

PENELOPE. I told you this morning, I expected to—to—have—a—a better position and that I'd know this evening. I—I—I—have got it and I've paid my bill. There it is— [*Pointing to the money*] and that's all that's necessary.

MME. DE MAILLY. How did you get that money?

PENELOPE. I won't tell you. I won't tell you anything more. Please let me go. You have no right to do this—no right.

MME. DE MAILLY. Once more—are you going to tell me?

PENELOPE. No.

MME. DE MAILLY. You needn't. I know the whole thing.

PENELOPE. What?

MME. DE MAILLY. I know where you got that money.

PENELOPE. *How* do you know?

MME. DE MAILLY. That doesn't matter. I know you're in some chorus.

PENELOPE. Who told you that?

MME. DE MAILLY. And I know you've taken up with one of the managers and he . . .

PENELOPE. Who told you? Who told you that? Who *told* you?

MME. DE MAILLY. Sh! Not so loud. Now see here, my dear girl. [*Sitting and trying to get* PENELOPE'S *hand.*] Don't be afraid to talk to me—no matter what's happened. I was a girl once myself, you know, and I know what it is to be a woman alone and struggle for existence. Don't be afraid of me. I'm going to help you no matter what's happened—no matter what you——

PENELOPE. Did Mr. Gibbs tell you this? He couldn't. How could he? How could he? Oh he did! He *did!*

MME. DE MAILLY. Never mind. Don't be afraid. You're going upstairs to your room and stay here and we're going to send this money back and——

PENELOPE. You can't do this to me, you *can't!* I won't have it! I'm going!

MME. DE MAILLY [*Taking* PENELOPE *forcibly by the arm*]. I've been hoping you were just a fool but if you try to get away now after I've offered to help you I'll *know* what you're up to.

PENELOPE. What do you mean?

MME. DE MAILLY. If you want me to believe you're a—the sort of a girl you *ought* to be, you won't say anything more about going.

PENELOPE. *Ought* to be? Oh!! [*With a gasp of*

horror as she understands.] *Oh!* How awful! Oh! *Oh!* How can you say such a thing!

MME. DE MAILLY. Now there—there—don't get excited. Don't make it any worse by trying to deceive me. I'm trying to help you and you must tell me the truth and stop this. *If* some rotten man has got hold of you . . .

PENELOPE [*Breaking away from* MME. DE MAILLY, *and getting to the door*]. He's the only one of all of you who is kind and good and understands.

MRS. DE MAILLY. Then there *is* a man. Who is he? Who is he? [PENELOPE *starts to open the door.*] Don't you dare go out of that door! Wait! You're throwing away every chance you've got in the world! It means the end of everything decent. Keep your head! Why don't you know young Gibbs is crazy about you? He wants to marry you. [PENELOPE *starts.*] He told me so right here—tonight. As true as you're standing there. I won't say one *word* to him about all this—nor the money nor anything. I'll tell him you went straight upstairs to bed and——

PENELOPE. You will do nothing of the kind!

MRS. DE MAILLY. If you've got sense enough to hold your tongue he'll never know anything and I'll——

PENELOPE. Hold my tongue! If I saw him I'd—— [NAPOLEON *comes in quickly. She takes fire at seeing him and rushes on breathlessly*]. If I saw him I'd be only too glad to tell him. What difference does it make what he knows? What difference does it make what he thinks?

NAPOLEON. None. I saw Trixie. She said you were coming over here and that you were going to stay with her tonight. You won't do that, will you?

PENELOPE. Of course I will.

NAPOLEON. That's all right. You can see her tomorrow. But you can't go home with her now.

PENELOPE. Oh yes, I can. She's a good friend and I——

MME. DE MAILLY [*To* NAPOLEON]. You run along now. Miss Penn's tired and excited. She's going to stay here with me. Everything's all right. You don't need to worry. She's told me all about everything.

PENELOPE. I haven't told you anything. [*To* NAPOLEON.] It's all just as I said it would be. I *did* go to supper with him—and I've got the money and I'm going to have more and you didn't believe me and . . .

NAPOLEON. You give me that money. I'll take it back to him.

PENELOPE. Oh no, you won't! It's mine! He says I've *more* than earned it and I'm going to have a very great deal more right away.

NAPOLEON. What?

PENELOPE. After my dance in the first act tonight I had to come out and do it eight times and people called "bravo," and he came back quick and told the stage manager I was a *hit*, and he didn't want me to go on with the others in the last act and he told me to hurry and we went off in his motor to his wonderful apartment and——

NAPOLEON. You——

PENELOPE. And he asked me if I wanted to be a great artist and be rich and have the whole world know me and that it would be easy if I'd only trust him—and I said I *did* trust him *absolutely* and that that was just *exactly* what I wanted—especially to be *rich*—because the boys just must go to college—and Mother *could* get perfectly well if she were taken care of—and father isn't really a very good preacher but a perfectly darling man, and I told him by the time I had come back to do my dance the last time and all those faces were smiling up at me and hands were stretched out and someone threw some flowers—I knew *then* I could do it! And the dancing was like floating —and something got warm and strong in my heart, and I knew—I *knew* they could all have all those things and that my dream had come true, and I told him that he had made it possible and that he was the only real help I'd ever had in my life and that I realized he was doing it because he was good and splendid and generous, and he turned away to the window and there were tears in his eyes because he understood and he said— "I guess you don't want any supper, little girl. You hop in that motor downstairs and go home." And then he opened the door and put some money in my hand, and said that was this week's salary and to come to rehearsal tomorrow morning and there'd be a new dance put in for me in the second act and that this was only the beginning. And now I'm going to Trixie's.

[NAPOLEON *drops into the nearest chair—his head goes forword into his hands.*]

MME. DE MAILLY [*After a pause*]. You do what-

ever you want to do, but think it over a minute. We've all been too worked up. And in case you *should* change your mind and stay I'm going to have Rosa put a bite to eat in the dining-room for you and Mr. Gibbs. And it's *all right*, you know—*I'm* here. [*She hesitates —then puts her hands on* PENELOPE'S *shoulder.*] That little room upstairs is *home* for you, as long as you want it, and don't you forget it! I'll have my door open in case you *should* want to speak to me. [*She lightly touches* PENELOPE'S *cheek.*] I guess you're going to be all right—*wherever* you are. [*She goes to the door and looks at* NAPOLEON.] Kind of makes you believe in things again, don't it? [*She goes out, closing the door.*]

PENELOPE. Oh—she didn't take the money after all.

NAPOLEON [*Rising*]. Then you'll have to take it up to her. [PENELOPE *goes to piano and puts the money in her purse.*] You see, Mrs. de Mailly really wants you to stay very much—and after all she's a pretty good sport, isn't she?

PENELOPE. I don't like people who change so the minute they know you have money.

NAPOLEON. Oh that isn't it!

PENELOPE. What is it then? What else *could* it be? *I'm* just the same.

NAPOLEON. Oh she—she just kind of saw a miracle performed and—we don't believe in 'em much, you know. We get kind of hard knocking around.

PENELOPE. You mean you didn't think I could succeed.

NAPOLEON. Yes, something like that. Penelope——

PENELOPE. I'd rather you didn't call me that.

NAPOLEON. You'll have to get out of this some time, you might as well do it now.

PENELOPE. Get out of what?

NAPOLEON. This stage stuff. You can't stand it—not for a little bit. It's ever so much better to stop right now than to——

PENELOPE. Oh, this is so foolish. Let's not waste time talking. You don't understand at all—at all—at all. [*She starts to go.*]

NAPOLEON. Let me ask you just one thing. While you *are* in the show, will you let me come and bring you home every night?

PENELOPE. No, of course not! It isn't necessary! What would people think?

NAPOLEON. Do you want 'em to think things about—about the—the way you got your—got *pushed* ahead?

PENELOPE. They *know*, they know I made a *hit*.

NAPOLEON. But they'll say the manager is in love with you and—and——

PENELOPE. And wants to marry me?

NAPOLEON. Y—e—s.

PENELOPE. No they won't. He's married already. So that settles *that*.

NAPOLEON. Well then they'll say worse things.

PENELOPE. What things?

NAPOLEON. Oh——

PENELOPE. The worse things they *could* say would be to be sorry for me because I haven't any beau at all.

NAPOLEON. Of course. That's it. Let 'em know you have got one.

PENELOPE. But I haven't.

NAPOLEON. Oh, but you have. You're everything, Penelope, to me, don't you know that? Can't you see how much I care? You do—you do know. You'll give me a chance, won't you? Won't you, dear?

PENELOPE. I'm awfully hungry and I haven't really had anything to eat yet.

NAPOLEON. You darling! [*Trying to get her hands.*]

PENELOPE. We're just friends, nothing more. [*Eluding him.*]

NAPOLEON. If we're *friends*—I could shout and yell and stand on my head. Look here—take that off. [*Taking her hat off.*] Penelope I, you, I—Do you—Penelope—I want to marry you. I love you. I want to take care of you.

PENELOPE. You didn't this afternoon. Have *you* changed too, because I've succeeded?

NAPOLEON. I've changed because I love you. Do you like me a little bit? [*She nods.*] More than a little bit? [*She nods again.*] Thank you.

PENELOPE. If I didn't, I shouldn't have been so unhappy.

NAPOLEON. Oh!

PENELOPE. It's only the people we do like who make us unhappy. It's only the people we think are wonderful, who can disappoint us.

NAPOLEON [*Drawing her on the sofa and sitting beside her*]. Kiss me now, yourself, please dear, because you want to—because you trust me. Say "Napoleon, I trust you, I love you, I'm going to marry you."

PENELOPE. "Napoleon——

NAPOLEON. No, let me see your eyes when you say it. Go on.

PENELOPE. "Napoleon, I——

NAPOLEON. Go on.

PENELOPE. I can't.

NAPOLEON. Why, dear? Why?

PENELOPE. I don't need to say it. [*Putting her arms about his neck, she kisses his lips.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

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